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Flick before you click

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: PARLOPHONE

You'll soon be whoever you want to be

There's a rite of passage every young man and woman must go through: the trip to the Photo Booth. Whether it's for passport, university ID or railcard, we've all run a hand through our hair, adjusted the seat height, chosen a background and squeezed our faces into a rictus of joy, rebellion or teenage angst as the camera clicks. Then lived with the hapless result for the next four to 10 years.

But there's change in the air. Soon those cubicles could be on the scrapheap. Instead, if AvatarMe (***www.avatarme.com***) have their way, there'll be digital Scanning Stations on the nation's railway platforms and bus termini. Four full-body shots will result in a 3D version of yourself, downloadable from the Internet and able to act as your character in multiplayer games or wander around virtual worlds.

Best of all, you won't be forced to live with that mohican you unwisely sported in the distant past. Online editing software will enable you to update your avatar's hairstyle or dress in the latest virtual fashions. Why stop there? Before heading for the avatar-driven chat rooms, give yourself a nice bushy 'tash or Man U tattoo on your forehead. And for blokes, the options are just as varied.

Read our report on page 38 – you'll soon be whoever you want to be.

Matthew Bingham, **Editor**
matthew.bingham@haynet.com

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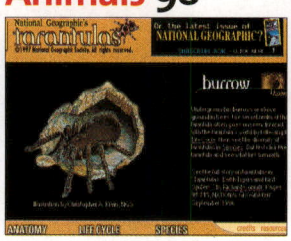

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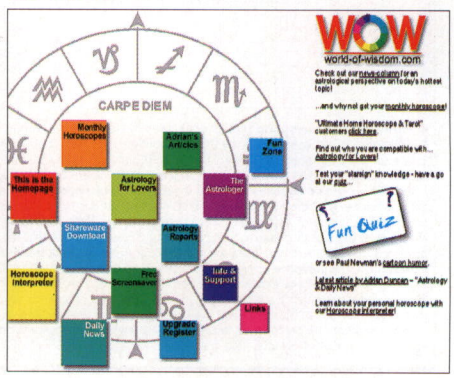

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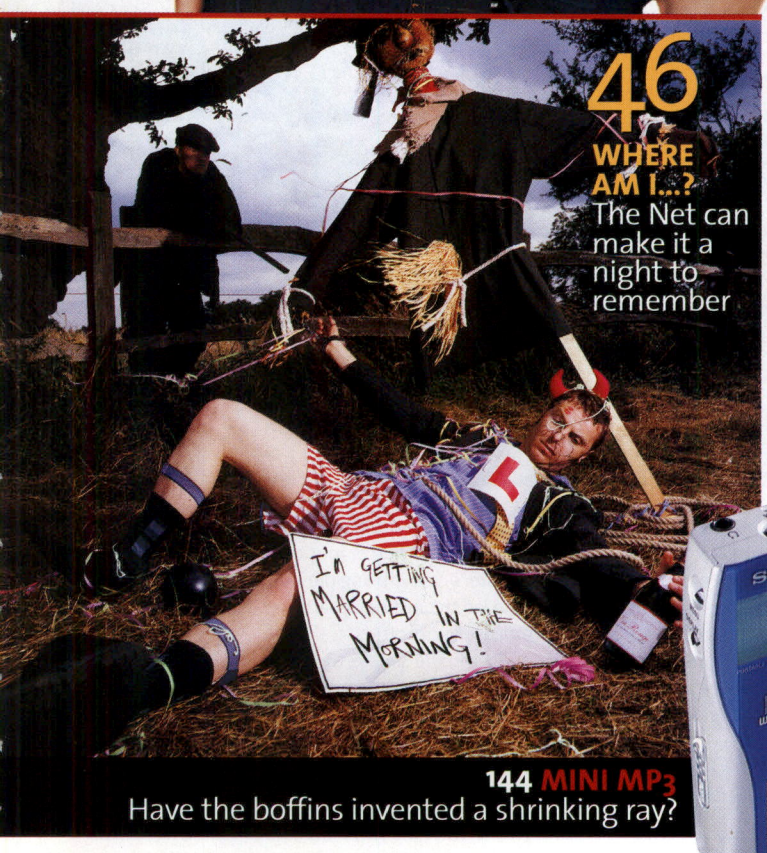

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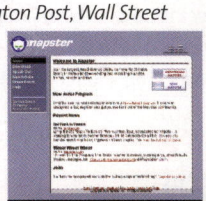
POPSTERS V NAPSTER

American pop stars in greed shock

Artists' appeal against Napster literally makes the headlines

Some of America's top recording artists have ganged up to appeal to the public's sense of decency as the Napster MP3 'piracy' controversy rumbles on.

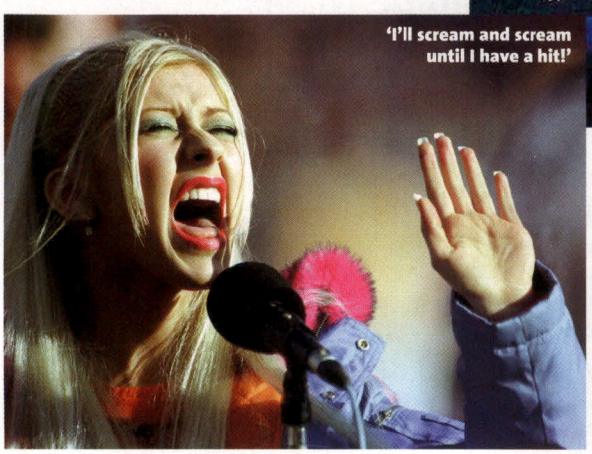
Around 70 entertainers have formed a coalition called Artists Against Piracy (AAP) and taken out full-page advertisements in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*.



Lars Ulrich provided a list of users who downloaded his songs

Obviously drawing on the lyrical talent of signatories like Jon Bon Jovi, Christina Aguilera and Garth Brooks, the ads read: 'If a Song Means a Lot to You, Imagine What it Means to Us'.

The AAP campaign was launched to coincide with a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the impact of online distribution on intellectual property. Napster CEO Hank Barry defended his song-swap software company (***www.napster.com***), while musicians such as Metallica's Lars Ulrich presented a different view. Ulrich has issued a lawsuit against Napster, going to the lengths of providing a list of thousands of users who used the software to download Metallica songs.



'I'll scream and scream until I have a hit!'

Napster is also being sued by the heavyweight Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), which represents the big Stateside record companies. Major stars like Elton John and Barry White have put their weight behind the RIAA's vigorous anti-piracy drive.

However, the game's not yet up for Napster, which has responded to the RIAA's lawsuit by claiming that federal law allows the copying of music for personal use. Napster's case is being presented by David Boies, who led the Justice Department's anti-trust case against Microsoft.

Back in the Senate, there was also good news for online music-swappers. The Senate commission warned the recording industry that fair and reasonable licensing deals must be cut to allow music titles to be swapped freely on the Net, or such laws would have to be enforced by Congress.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: EMPICS, KOBAL, RETNA

ministryofsound.com: Ibiza first

DANCE

SURFING IT LARGE IN IBIZA

The annual exodus from clubland to dance paradise Ibiza has been marked this year by a sizeable Web presence from the big players.

Several sites have gone big on providing extensive coverage from the island so those still trapped in Blighty don't feel left out; besides Webcasts and video diaries, there's a chance to peep at Boy George's diary. Others have been providing Net facilities on the White Island so clubbers don't have to miss their Internet fix in the Med.

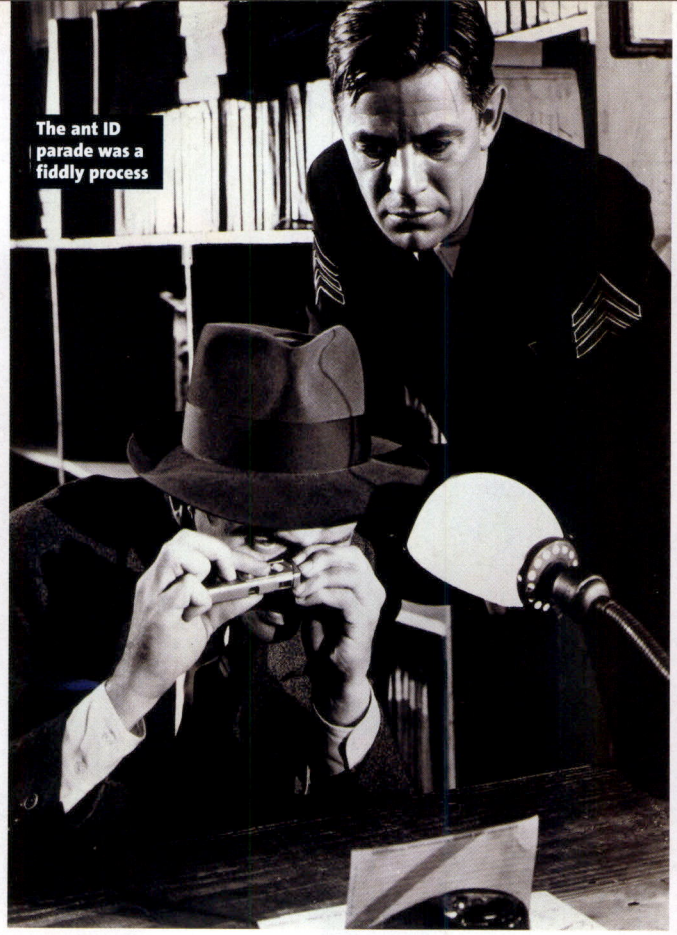
The Ministry of Sound (***www.ministryofsound.com***) led the way

Carl Cox: always a good mixer

with an interactive map and email 'e-flyer' updates, along with info on last-minute flight deals. eJay.com (***www.ejay.com***) , of which DJ Carl Cox is a director, is sponsoring several (not at all chemically enhanced) 22-hour nights at the Space club, which are streamed onto Internet radio.

The nationwide Galaxy FM (***www.galaxyfm.co.uk***) network has also got in on the act. Glam Galaxy presenter Melanie Sykes was beamed around the world by Webcam in mid-July, while fellow celeb DJ Boy George has been among those keeping diaries.

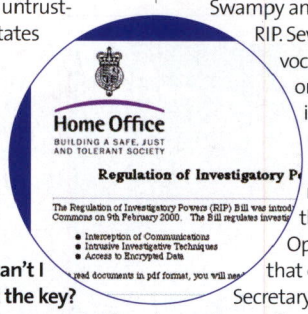
And if exhausted clubbers need a dark space to collapse into after 22 hours down the disco, Worldpop (***www.worldpop.com***) have joined with Sony to provide swish cybercafés at Mambo Savannah, the Pacha night club terrace bar and the Playa Pacha beach bar. Clubbers can send virtual postcards to the folks back in Blighty.


The ant ID parade was a fiddly process

KNOWHOW

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT...?
No.14: RIP

RIP? Who's died?
No one yet, although RIP opponents claim civil liberties could be doomed.
Doomed? What by? What's happening?!
Calm down, you'll attract attention to yourself, and some might say that's a bad idea. Opponents of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Bill claim it's a blank slate for folk to snoop into your email in a way that Postman Pat would never allow.
Snooping into email – what's the justification?
Privacy is apparently untrustworthy. The RIP Bill states that if a message or device traced to you contains encrypted data, you can be forced by statutory order to hand over the key needed to decrypt that data.
It's an outrage! But can't I just say that I've lost the key?
You can if you fancy two years in the clink. In an interesting reversal of the innocent-until-proven guilty legal maxim, you'd have to prove in a court that you had lost or forgotten the key or you could be locked up.
How do you prove you've forgotten something?
I did know the answer to that one, but it's gone. No, honestly. Unhand me at once!
Has opposition been organised?
Civil rights watchdog Privacy International (***www.privacy.org/pi***) chivvied 50 organisations into signing an open letter to the House of Lords ahead of the Parliamentary debate on the bill. The Government suffered another blow when Web site ***www.the451.com*** revealed that RIP would allow security forces to capture data from a cross-section of the public and examine it all for wrongdoing – rather than keep tabs on named suspects.
Is it getting through Parliament?
Not easily – it's not just been Swampy and his mates against RIP. Several MPs have been vocally opposed and organised themselves in guerrilla-style by proposing over 48 pages of amendments just to slow the Bill up; an Opposition proposal that only the Home Secretary could authorise email surveillance (as is the case with phone-tapping) was defeated by just one vote, despite Labour's huge Parliamentary majority; and the Bill was defeated in the Lords when peers insisted an advisory board be set up to examine the cost of installing the systems.
So is RIP going to die?
No. As we go to press, it's still being pushed through Parliament into law. Keep tabs on it at ***www.homeoffice.gov.uk/oicd/ripbill.htm***.

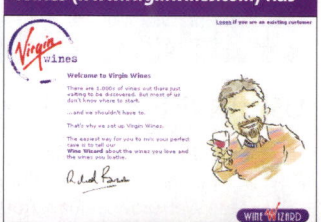


News Bytes
BITS IN BRIEF

The Dutch terrace auction went well

FOOTBALL THE BEST THING EVER – OFFICIAL
Euro 2000's Web site, the ingeniously titled ***www.euro2000.org***, became the most visited Web site in history, beating the previous record-holder – funnily enough, the France 98 World Cup site. ***Euro2000.org*** registered 128 million page impressions, generating a total of 1.41 billion hits. It's not recorded how many of those were fans of Phil Neville.

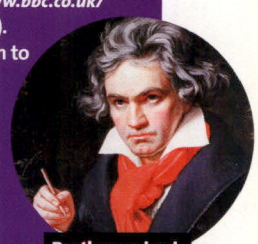
WIN WINE FOR LIFE
Nothing like free alcohol to catch the public attention, and Virgin Wines (***www.virginwines.com***) has



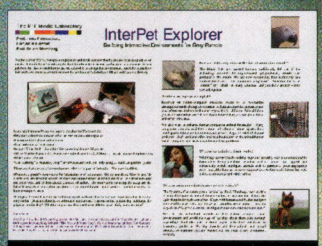
Branson: free wine – he can afford it

provided it. Each month Virgin Wines will put one golden bottle into a case of wine purchased on the Web site; the lucky recipient gets a gratis case worth up to £65 every three months for 20 years.

STARS IN THEIR EARS
Think you can spot the next Benjamin Britten? Radio 3 would like to borrow your ears for the BBC Talent New Composers competition (***www.bbc.co.uk/talent/composers***). Visitors can listen to five finalists per month in Real Audio or MP3.


Beethoven, lend us your ears

MORE DOMAIN NAMES
Bored of .net, .com and .org? The Pacific island of Tuvalu is to license .tv domain names through the dotTV Corporation. In addition, the Internet Corporation for Assign Names and Numbers is to introduce new names like .travel.



Now Polly can ask for a cracker online

PARROT POWER

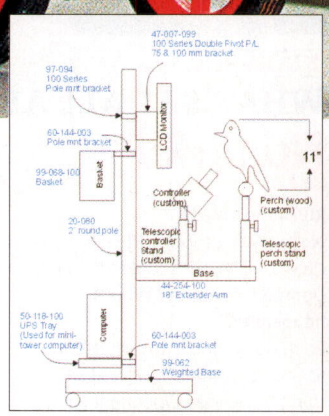
Meet Surf Parrot

US scientists design browser for a lonely African Grey

American scientists are beavering away, designing a Web browser for parrots in a bid to relieve the sociable creatures' loneliness.

Lucky 20-month-old African Grey Arthur – or 'Wart' to Professor Irene Pepperberg and her team – has been given a special browser known as the InterPet Explorer. It consists of a plastic box with two clickable levers: one selects pictures, the other lets him listen to music.

However, Arthur isn't fully enjoying his time online. Although the music pleases him, he seems unaffected by the pictures. Maybe that's because his list of bookmarks isn't the most extensive – at the moment he's clicking between four 'sites', which is hardly harnessing the power of the Net.



The aim for Professor Pepperberg and her colleagues is to get Arthur and his feathered friends chatting online while their owners are at work. There are plans to develop software to allow parrots to enjoy interactive chat with humans and other species.

The aim is to get Arthur chatting online

However, that's not the end of the fun for Surf Parrot. Pepperberg is hoping to get Arthur to enjoy multi-player video games and a jukebox.

The scientists' next aim is to get dogs online. But we think they should concentrate on teaching parrots to write news stories.

www.media.mit.edu/~benres/parrot/interpet1.pdf

LIVE 2000

DOTCOMS CLAMBER TO BE AT LIVE 2000

Top dotcoms are queuing round the block to display their wares at Live 2000, which takes place at Earl's Court in London from 21-24 September.

The UK's biggest home entertainment and new technology show, Live 2000 will feature big hitters like AOL, Beenz, Gameplay and Peoplesound. They'll be demystifying recent tech innovations like MP3, DVD, WAP, SACD, D-VHS, interactive TV and the Internet.

The Web-based fun will centre around the Online Pavilion, a specially designed feature area sponsored by Freeserve and supported by *the net* magazine. There'll be a series of Internet and e-commerce presentations every day during Live 2000, and if you're particularly unlucky you could meet staff members from Britain's biggest Internet magazine (that's us) in person.

In addition to the Online Pavilion, Live 2000 will feature the Warner DVD Experience, a 260-seat theatre showcasing the newest home cinema technology. The Home Entertainment Zone, supported by *What Hi-Fi?* magazine, will bring you the best in hi-fi and home entertainment, including flat-screen and widescreen TVs, DVDs and the best tune-making machines on the market.

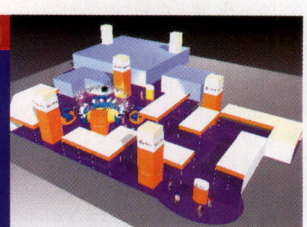
Readers of *the net* can take advantage of a great money-saving offer which will shave off £4 per ticket – and if you buy four adult tickets you can get one free. See page 76 for more details. *www.live2000.com*

All clothes supplied by Gap

ON THE ONLINE PAVILION

The following big hitters will be smoothing out the wrinkles in your techie brow

- 21store.com
- AOL
- Beenz.com
- Buyyourwebsitenow.com
- Buzz
- Cycosmos
- Fortunecity.com
- Freeserve
- Gameplay
- Ihavemoved.com
- Intelligent Finance
- Madaboutwine.com
- Moonfruit.com
- Peoplesound.com
- Stepstone
- Thefirstresort.com
- Waysearch
- World Online



GADGET

NEVER MISS ANOTHER PHONE CALL

Ever worry that you're missing phone calls while you're surfing the Net? A new downloadable gadget lets you manage your calls as you surf – and it's free.

With Net call costs becoming less of a worry, surfers are learning to relax while online. However, in households with one phone line, there's the nagging doubt that someone is trying to get through. The On-Line Call Manager, available free from ***www.ocmuk.com***, provides an on-screen alert when someone tries to call you.

The window displays the name and number of the caller, then lets you go offline to take the call, transfer the call to another line – or you can take the call as a Voice over Internet Protocol on the PC. Another option is to send it to a voice mail box, where you can pre-record messages suggesting the caller tries again later.

In addition, you can find out when friends call with the same system are online and make free calls over the Internet.

All the services are gratis, except for a 10p per minute charge for calls you redirect.

'Connex South Central helpline...'

Teenagers: vocal

Top of the Games

Console kids compete for crown at UKCC

Games players are battling it out in the first national console championships – with a chance to win £15,000.

The UK Console Championships (UKCC) kicks off with regional heats throughout August before the grand final at the Live 2000 exhibition at Earl's Court in September.

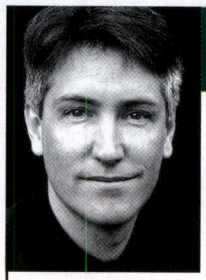
The UKCC will bring together all three major consoles, with devotees of PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Dreamcast able to choose which machine to play on.

The Welsh regional heat was on 5 August, but you still have time for the Scottish heat on 12 August, Northern England heat on 19 August or the Southern England heat on 9 September.

Competitors will be whittled down to two representatives per console in each region; they'll go to the grand final on 23 September.

The UKCC is sponsored by Gameplay, which is celebrating a double victory in the Yell UK Web awards. And with a £1,000 cheque for each winner, kids will have a viable argument when mum complains about 'pointless computer games'.

www.ukconsolechamps.com



JON CASIMIR

WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

Computer nerd scores thanks to Web community

That Newton guy had a few ideas about the balance of the universe. For every action, he argued, there was an equal and opposite reaction. Sure enough, while studying physics in school, I observed Newton's reality day after day. For every accumulation of computer skills, there was an equal and opposite decrease in sexual attractiveness.

Before the dotcom gold rush, geeks did not get laid. Nowadays, however, being digital could mean your sex life involves more than your own digits. At least, this may be the case for Walter, a Canadian student who recently used his Web skills to jettison his virginity.

The story goes like this: horny high school guy somehow convinces two girls in his class, Samantha and Karen, to agree to simulate the congress of the bee with him if he can get a million hits on his lame-o Web site. Thinking

Before the dotcom gold rush, geeks did not get laid

themselves safe from Walter's clutches, the young women fail to appreciate just how happy the wider Web community usually is to throw its weight behind pointless quests.

The Walter's Mission site (***www.geocities.com/walters_mission***) opened for business on 4 June. People fell for it, though there were as many reasons to doubt Walter's existence as to believe it. First and foremost, the photo of himself seemed too jaw-droppingly geeky to be true. Indeed, the pic can be found in one of the early galleries at Ugly People (***www.uglypeople.com***), a site which specialises in uncharitable humour.

Anyway, less than four weeks later, Walter's Mission was able to add a report on 'Samantha and Walter's big night!!' which involved 'Three glow-in-the-dark condoms, ice cubes, the messing up of her entire apartment (if you know what I mean), screams of joy so loud the neighbour's dog started barking, and a beautiful sunrise the next morning'.

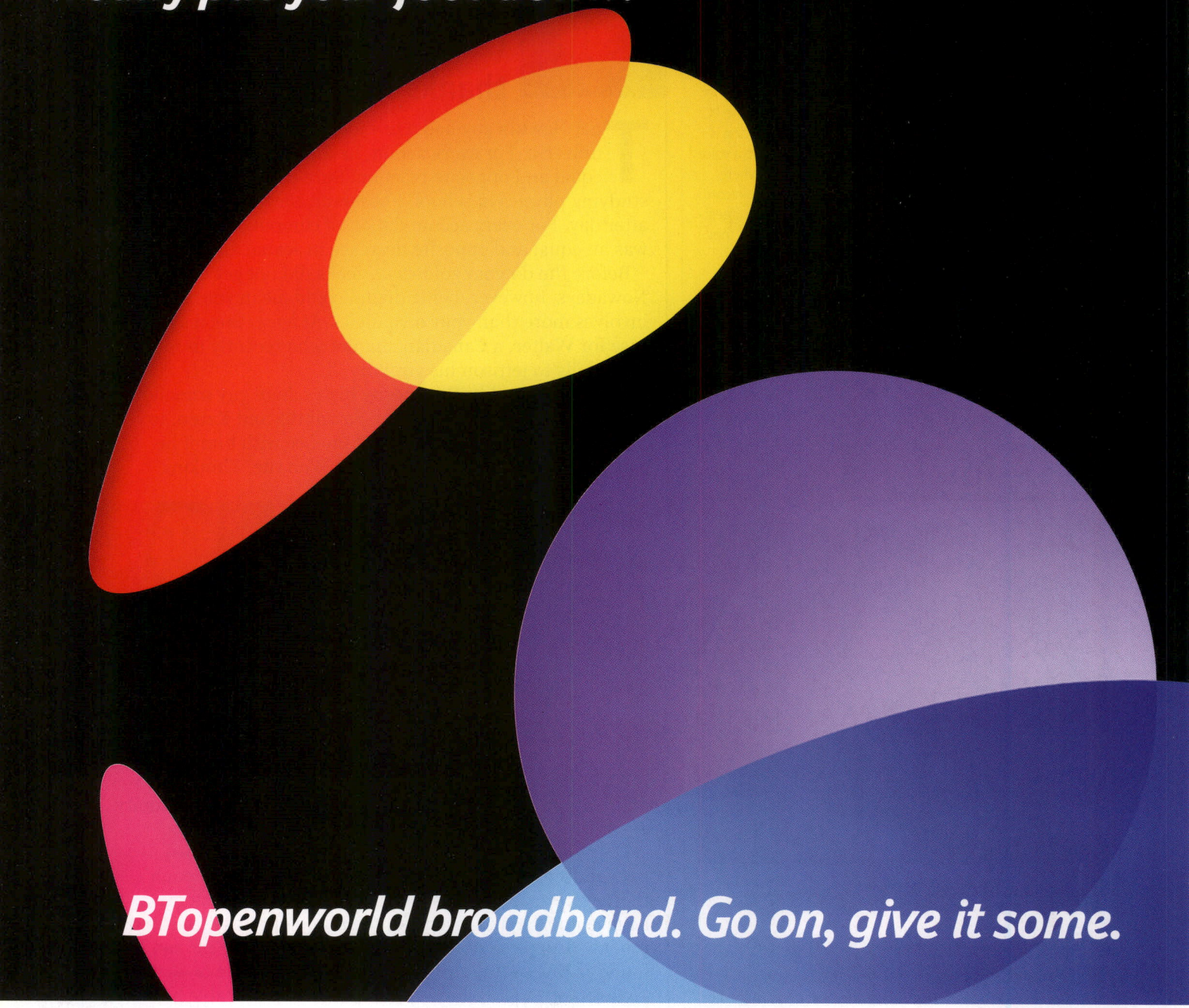
What had happened was simple. News of Walter's plight had flashed around the online world and crowds of biblical proportions turned up. The log stats for the site tell the story of the pilgrimage. They came in the tens of thousands. They came from a hundred countries. They came mostly on Thursdays.

Walter, of course, came later.

PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION, PA

While travelling on the information superhighway, have you ever felt the urge to really put your foot down?

BT



BTopenworld broadband. Go on, give it some.

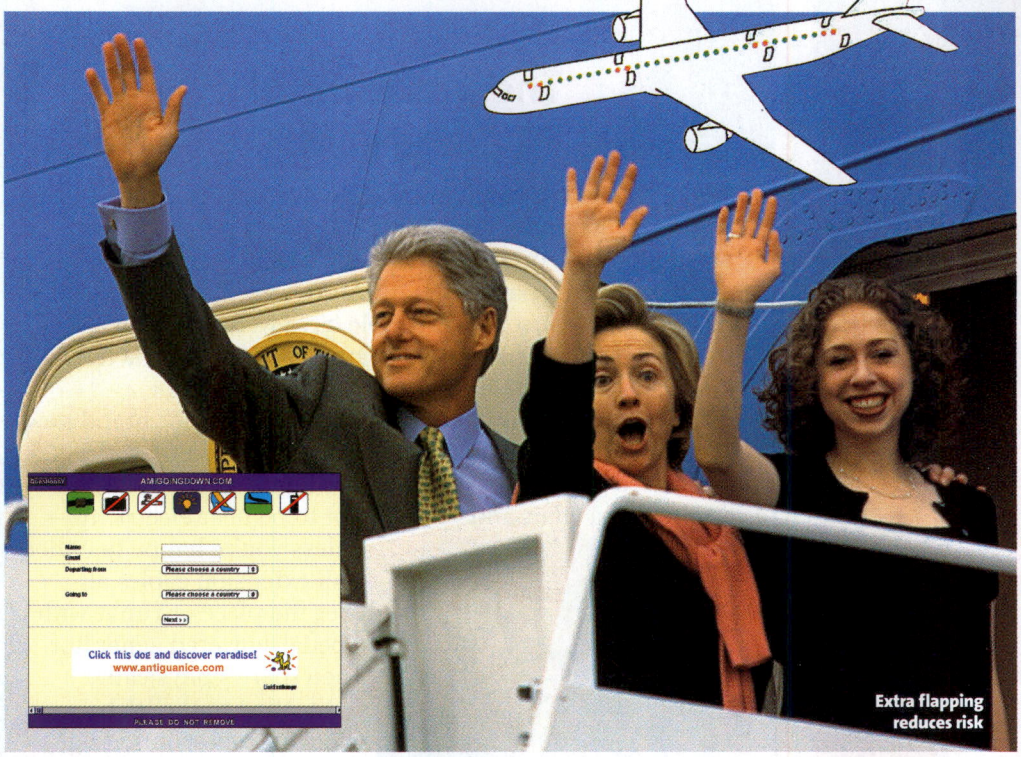
BTopenworld, ADSL technology is here. This is the development that will have the greatest impact on the net in the forseeable future. It means you can get Internet service up to ten times faster than a conventional modem. You'll have an uninterrupted, high speed Internet access that's always on. Giving you access to BTopenworld's extensive content, a cost effective service for residential customers and small businesses. So the net can now be all the things it's always promised to be. All you've got to do is visit btopenworld.com and register. Blimey. Not exactly an option, is it?

BTopenworld
www.btopenworld.com

AVAILABILITY IS SUBJECT TO YOUR LOCAL EXCHANGE BEING UPGRADED AND SURVEY. MINIMUM 12 MONTH CONTRACT TERM.

THE BEST, THE WORST AND THE DAFTEST STUFF ON THE WEB

HEROES & ZEROS



MOST REASSURING SITE

RELAX – STATISTICS SAY IT'S SAFE TO FLY

A fear of flying is nothing to be ashamed of, and you'll be heartened to know your chances of dying in a plane crash are remote. And now it's possible to find out exactly how remote, thanks to Am I Going Down? This site will compile 'personalised mortality statistics' for you based on where you're travelling, when, and in which type of plane. Taking a BA Boeing from London to New York? Your chances of snuffing it are a mere one in 67 million. A Kenya Airways flight from Sierra Leone to Somalia, however, is almost 600 times more potentially fatal. Sleep safely, now.

www.amigoing-down.com

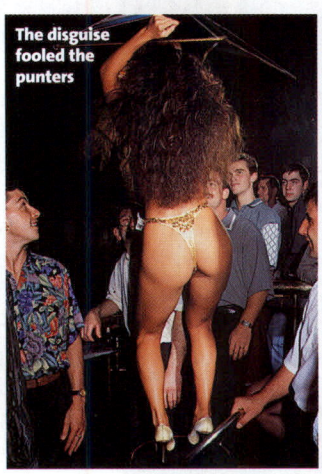
Daniella peered down the rolled-up banknote

MOST PURITANICAL IDEA

THE LAW OVERRIDES DECENCY – HOORAY!

Family values campaigners in Carolina thought they'd found a way to 'restore decency' in the community when they decided to photograph strip club patrons' licence plates – and post the pictures on the Web. The crusade by the Carolina Family Alliance hit a snag, however, when it was pointed out that their actions – and the group's intention to notify punters' families of their activities – infringed civil liberties. The photos have had to be taken down. Back to the drawing board, guys.

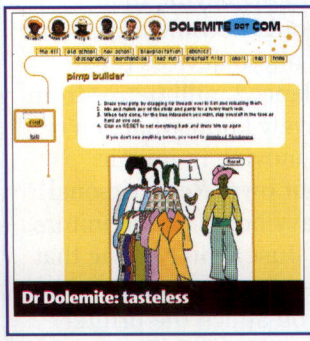
www.familyalliance.org



The disguise fooled the punters

STRANGEST SITE Folks get nosey

Some people pierce them. Some people have them 'fixed.' But Cynsa Bonorris has dedicated an entire Web site to his most prominent facial feature. Read his 'beans up the nose' tale and watch a 'Nose Video'. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this site is that 50,000 people have visited since its inception. ***www.well.com/user/cynsa/nosepage.html***



Dr Dolemite: tasteless

MOST ENTERTAINING SITE

WHO'S THE DADDY?

Devotees of classic blaxploitation flick *Shaft* will be eagerly awaiting the forthcoming remake with Samuel L Jackson. In the meantime, why not satisfy your craving for dodgy clothing with Dr Dolemite's Pimp Builder, in which you can furnish an unsavoury-looking character with a variety of *Shaft*-style outfits.

www.dolemite.com/pimpbuilder.htm

PICTURES: PA, REX

X
ALL.COM'S FOR 15QUID A YEAR + VAT AT WWW.15QUID.COM
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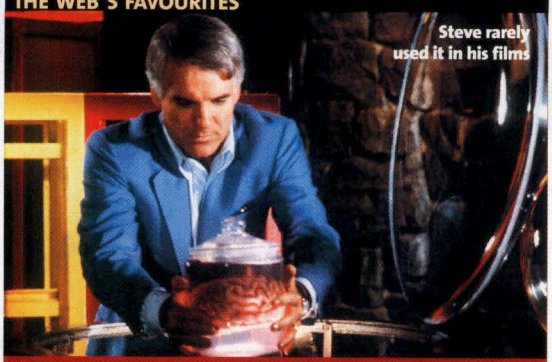
AGENTS REQUIRED

Net Charts

5

THE WEB'S FAVOURITES



Steve rarely used it in his films

ODDEST ITEMS LOST

1 Human brain in a jar
2 False teeth
3 A didgeridoo
4 Crutches
5 A glass eye

www.yellowtag.com

MOST BIZARRE SEARCH REQUESTS

1 Where can I find a false leg for my dog?
2 Where can I hire a knife-thrower for my children's party?
3 Where can I find a chicken sexer?
4 Where is the nearest MI5 store to Northampton?
5 Where can I sell 25,000 pairs of legwarmers?
6 Who can arrange camel treks around London?
7 Where can I purchase rubber underwear?
8 Where can I find an igloo-maker?
9 Where can I find a Christian hairdresser?

www.scoot.co.uk

REQUESTS MADE OF TESCO HOME-DELIVERY DRIVERS

1 Take a bride to the church
2 Change the light bulbs
3 Programme the video
4 Unblock the sink
5 Join a customer for a candlelit Valentine's dinner

www.tesco.com

SOUTH PARK SALES

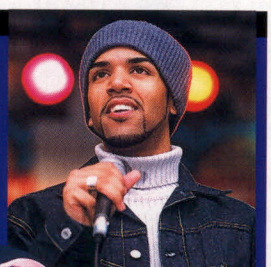
1 *They Killed Kenny* T-shirt
2 *Death of Kenny* cap
3 Collage (large)
4 *I Killed Kenny* T-shirt
5 *Four Deaths of Kenny* T-shirt

www.fandom.com

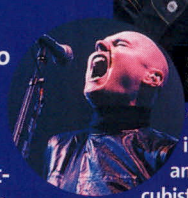
SPOKEN WORD

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

Odd celeb quotes on the Web



Craig was unaware of the approaching lorry

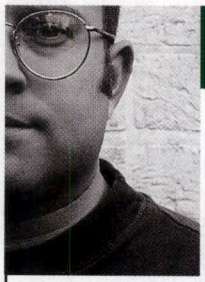


'I think I used to be a butterfly. No, a bird. No, birds get chased and butterflies look like bugs. I guess I was a dog.' *CRAIG DAVID GETS CONFUSED AT* ***c3.vmg.co.uk***

'It's as radical and important as Braque and Picasso doing cubist, you know, drawings.' *SMASHING PUMPKINS' BILLY CORGAN IN TYPICALLY MODEST MODE AT* ***the-raft.com/talk***

'A lot of my problems come when I'm injured – I seem to get bored and pissed off with everything.' *GAZZA TALKS TO THE DAILY RECORD AT* ***www.record-mail.co.uk***

'If David Beckham asked me out I would oblige him.' *DAVID GRAY IS COMPLETELY DAZZLED BY HIS NEW-FOUND FAME, AT* ***www.chat.beeb.com/chat***



TIM RICHARDSON

WEB WATCHER

The problems of PC placement

The Internet is fast becoming an everyday part of family life. More and more people consider a personal computer – or a Mac (hey, let's be PC about this) – to be just as much a part of the furniture as a TV, sofa or family pet. It's great that so many people have welcomed the Net into their homes. But while this greater acceptance is terrific news, it does pose at least one practical problem.

Faced with a mountain of boxes containing your brand new computer, where do you put it? First, you've got to find somewhere physically big enough to house the machine, its peripherals, a chair and you. It's got to be near electricity – unless you're happy to either trail extension cables all over the place or run it with a pedal-powered generator. Then there's physically connecting to the Web, which means scouting out the whereabouts of the phone socket. I sent a laptop – and me – flying across the room one day after tripping up over a phone cable.

Okay, forget practicalities for a moment. If you had the choice, where would you prefer to have your PC? In a communal area such as the sitting room or kitchen or tucked away in a bedroom?

Wearable PCs could become as popular as legwarmers

You don't want your PC smelling of chip fat so the kitchen's out. The dining room is bad news because that's where washing goes when it's wet outside. The sitting room's no good because of competition from the TV. And the bedroom's bad news because... well, just because.

Thankfully, there could be an alternative. A group of designers is currently touring the world displaying their range of wearable computers, which could become as popular as legwarmers were in the 80s. These micro devices range from postage stamp-sized screens, balanced millimetres from the eye, to wired devices that instinctively know what you're typing... even though your fingers are moving in midair.

So we could all have computers of our own. *Real* personal computers. No need to lug around heavy boxes and monitors. No need to stretch cables everywhere. Just a dinky thing that pops neatly into your pocket, or hangs like a pendant around your neck. Only trouble is, where do you attach the printer?

PICTURES: KOBAL, RETNA

however you use the Internet

Freeserve has the Internet call package for you

Whenever you want to use the Internet, and for however long, there's a Freeserve Internet call package available now.
*Get a £1 rebate off your BT SurfTime charge of £5.99 every month that you stay online with Freeserve Off Peak. That's over 500 hours of free off peak Internet time each month.**
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Dixons PC WORLD THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE Currys The Link @jakarta

WEBSITES

Trance, visions, vamps

The best of the latest sites to have gone galloping onto the Web

Struggling musicians are typically shoe-gazing types who don't get out enough, preferring instead to sit in their chilly bedrooms penning more tales of angst. However, **Hobomusic** (***www.hobomusic.com***) is aiming to harness the power of this InterWeb thingy to bring the music community together.

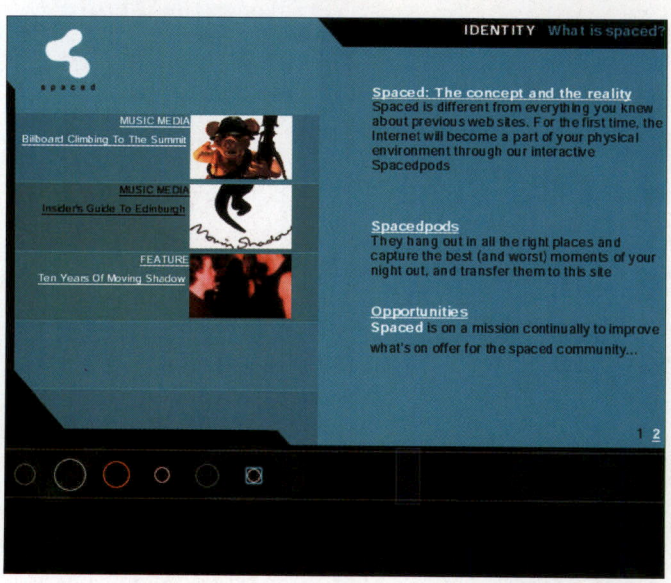
Through the classifieds section, budding Thom Yorkes (without groups) can find fellow tortured souls to beef up their bands, and local rehearsal rooms in which to polish up the act; then when it's time to hit the studio for that all-important demo CD, there's a list of studios complete with pricing, equipment and even availability. Still doesn't help much if your tunes are bobbins, though.

It's not a great leap from the music industry to vampires, which takes us neatly on to **NewBlood** (***www.newblood.net***). Britain's first online TV series is already up to its third season of three-minute downloadable files which appear each Monday at 7pm, and the first two series are archived online if you want to catch up. *NewBlood* is a *Matrix*-style thriller set in today's London club culture with a bunch of third-generation vampires keeping the peace between humankind and 'bloodkind'.

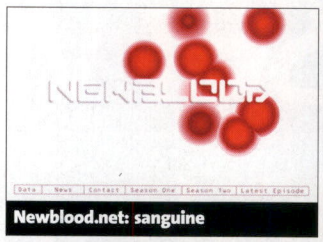
If vampires aren't to your taste but you still fancy a bit of drama, you could always get your kicks from the other kind of flickering box. **DigiGuide** (***www.digiguide.com***) avoids the annoying irrelevance of all too many magazine TV guides by letting you choose the channels for which you need info – and even the order in which they appear on the page – when you first access the site. Rather smashingly, you download DigiGuide to your desktop, so you don't even have to be on the Net to use it. Then, when you need an update, a quick click will grab a new set of listings for the next 14 days, which you can view in detail by channel or time. Indispensable for fans of the idiot's lantern.

Finally for this month: lost property. If you're the sort of person who'd lose his head if it wasn't screwed on (© your Mum), check out **Yellowtag** at ***www.yellowtag.com***. Here you can buy vivid yellow tags (hence the name) to plaster all over your valuables. These tags each carry a unique identity code in the form of an email address. The theory is that the finder of your lost laptop or missing mobile sends an email to Yellowtag, which is then either anonymously forwarded to your own email address or can be read via the Web site.

As for those Good Samaritan finders, they all go into a prize draw for the chance to win £6,000 – so everyone's happy. Perfect!

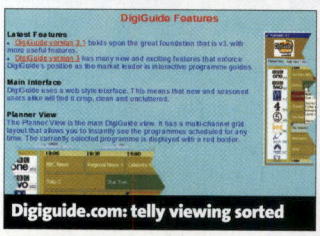


SPACED Few things in life are more enjoyably evocative than photos of you and your mates givin' it large on a night out. And now you don't even have to take your Instamatic, thanks to Spaced. These good-time guys and girls have been plumbing 21st-Century Photo-Me booths into clubs up and down the land; £2 gets you and your mates digitally photographed several times, the results are stored at *www.spaced.co.uk* and you can email chums to let them see just how hammered you were. Check the well-designed, Shockwave-heavy site for amusing examples, plus club info aplenty.



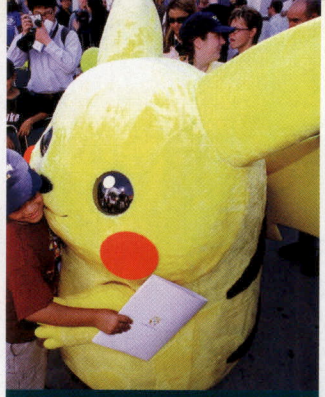
Newblood.net: sanguine

Hobomusic.com: comprehensive



Digiguide.com: telly viewing sorted

Yellowtag.com: help for the forgetful



MOST SEARCHED TERMS

1 MP3
2 Sex
3 Hotmail
4 Yahoo
5 Warez
6 Pokemon
7 Amazon
8 Chat
9 Nude
10 Playboy

www.cyberbritain.co.uk

BIGGEST MONEY-MAKERS ON MP3.COM

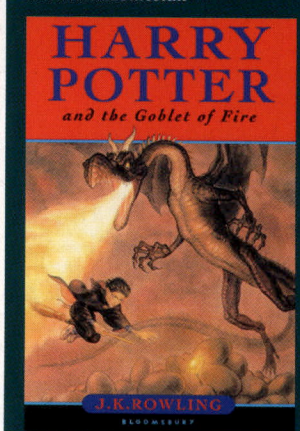
1 **Ernesto Cortazar** (Easy Listening) *$24,000 during June*
2 **303Infinity** (Electronic) *$22,000*
3 **Subliner** (Electronic) *$16,000*
4 **Bassic** (Electronic) *$11,000*
5 **The Cynic Project** (Electronic) *$10,000*

www.mp3.com

AMAZON BEST-SELLERS

1 **Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire** *JK Rowling*
2 **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone** *JK Rowling*
3 **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** *JK Rowling*
4 **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** *JK Rowling*
5 **The Return of the Naked Chef** *Jamie Oliver*

www.amazon.co.uk



TOP VIDEO RENTALS

1 Stigmata
2 Blue Streak
3 Deep Blue Sea
4 End of Days
5 Angela's Ashes

www.blockbuster.co.uk

WEBSITE WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: ONLINE USA, PA

Added X appeal

Danny Graydon checks out the summer releases

Snatch ★★★★

Brad Pitt, Vinnie Jones

By no means disappointing, this follow-up to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* manages to work despite its reliance on style over content. It's a better-acted film, with Brad Pitt (of all people) giving an excellent comedy performance as an Oirish pikey boxer, and shows director Ritchie to be no one-hit wonder with excellent and funny set-pieces delivered with flair. *The official site* (***www.snatch-the-movie.com)*** *isn't fully up yet, but look at* ***countingdown.com/snatch****.*

Rules of Engagement ★★★

Samuel L Jackson, Tommy Lee Jones

Taut courtroom thriller about military values. Jackson turns to buddy-turned-lawyer Jones when he's accused of slaughtering 83 people during an allegedly peaceful protest. Engaging and suspenseful, the chemistry between the heavyweight leads is as good as you'd expect.

www.rulesmovie.com

Impressive mix of production info, clips, trailer, interviews and games.

***The Perfect Storm*: looks like rain...**

The Perfect Storm ★★★

George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg

This year's major 'When Nature Rebels' entry follows six fishermen who ignore storm warnings and head out to sea, thus deserving to get caught in the middle of colliding hurricanes, peril and mammoth special effects. Clooney and Wahlberg are suitably grungy sea dogs, doing 'heroic' with gusto, but the (awe-inspiring) effects eclipse both them and the script. Thrilling – but a run-of-the-mill disaster flick.

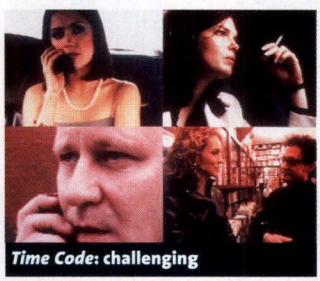
www.perfectstorm.net

Massively informative site with in-depth features on special effects.

Time Code ★★★★

Salma Hayek, Saffron Burrows

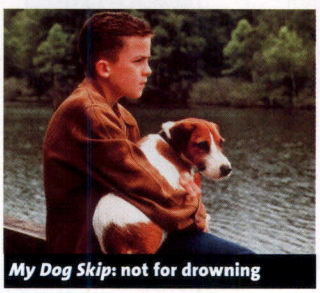
An intriguing and brave experiment: shot with four digital cameras, the screen is split into four segments, each one a single 93-minute take, portraying inter-related tales of adultery. Not as confusing as it sounds, as director Mike Figgis demonstrates his skill – even if the story is (intentionally) eclipsed by the technique. A challenging alternative in the blockbuster season.



***Time Code*: challenging**

***Shanghai Noon*: Chantastic**

***Snatch*: another dose of Vinnie**



***My Dog Skip*: not for drowning**

www.timecode2000.com

A visually stunning and enticing site, showcasing both film and technique.

Blood, Guts, Bullets and Octane ★★★★

Joe Carnahan, Dan Leis

Allegedly made for a paltry $7,300, this little indie gem sports its Tarantino influences with pride. Sid and Bob are a pair of used-car salesman staring bankruptcy in the face. An offer of $250,000 to look after a vintage car for two days offers the chance of redemption... until greed gets the better of them. Director Carnahan shows great potential in this stylish debut.

www.nextwavefilms.com/bgbomn/index.html *The low-down on the low-budget winner.*

Shanghai Noon ★★★

Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson, Lucy Liu

If *Wild, Wild West* nearly killed the action-comedy Western, Jackie Chan offers resuscitation. In 1881 Nevada, Chan teams up with a train robber to rescue a beautiful Chinese princess. As in *Rush Hour*, Chan enjoys good chemistry with the other leads and shows off his particular brand of physical comedy.

studio.go.com/movies/shanghainoon

Chan fans will delight in the clips and comedy outtakes.

Julien Donkey-boy ★★★★

Ewen Bremner, Chloe Sevigny

With its stripped-down, no-frills style, this glimpse of schizophrenia through the eyes of a sufferer is unflinchingly honest. Ewen Bremner is superb as Julien, whose fractured reality is a kaleidoscope of suffering and confusion. While the emotional content may offend some, it offers a sympathetic view of a terrible illness.

www.juliendonkeyboy.com

Discussion board and out-takes.

My Dog Skip ★★★

Kevin Bacon, Diane Lane

A good-natured tale of a young boy and his beloved pooch, *My Dog Skip* has a warmth and charm only the blackest-hearted cad could dislike. Based on a best-seller, it tells of how a lonely boy in 40s Mississippi wins popularity and confidence through his dog. For those with rose-tinted memories of a favourite mutt.

mydogskip.warnerbros.com

The official, thorough, site.

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

The X-Men ★★★★★

Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen

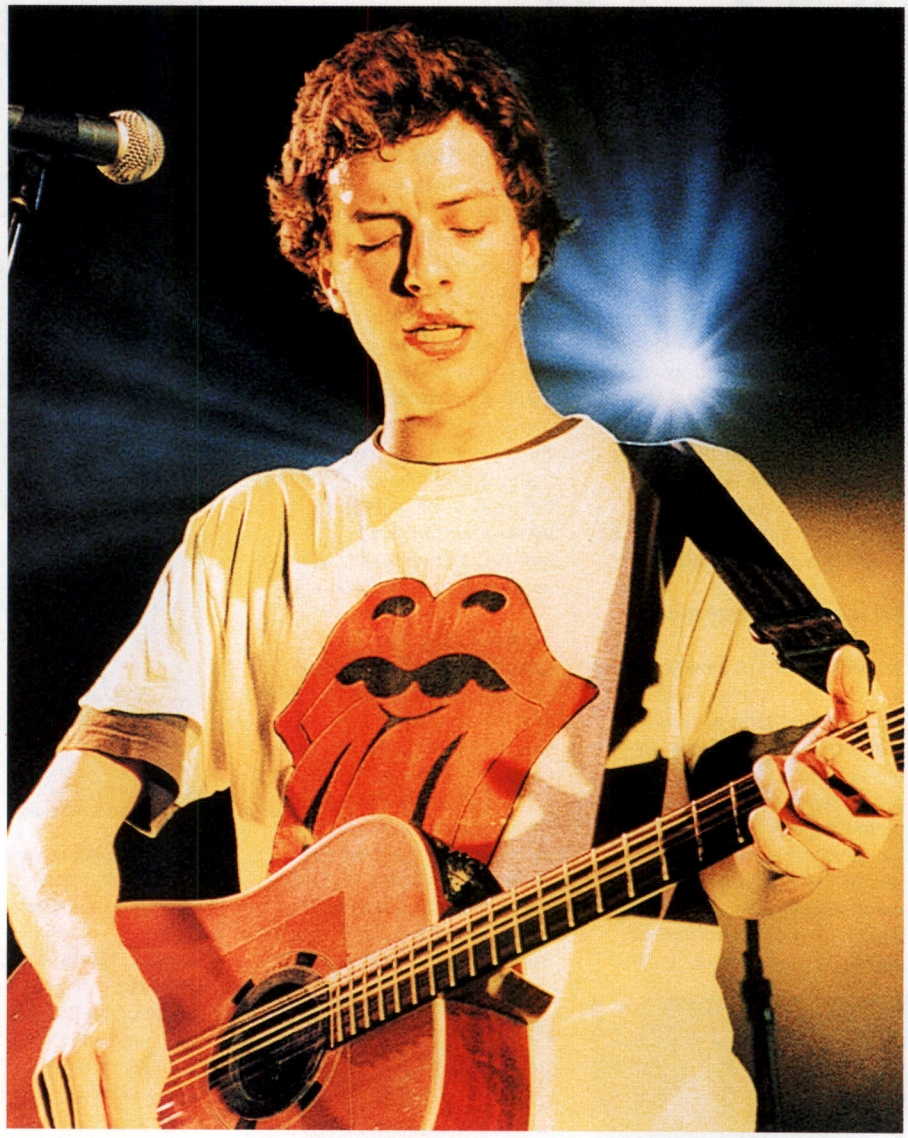
After a string of failures, Marvel Comics finally get a shot at blockbusterdom. Thanks to Bryan Singer's able direction and faithful approach, this is a world away from *Batman and Robin's* awfulness. Stunning special effects and a thrilling story is supported by – get this – developed characters. Stewart and McKellen provide heavyweight support as the opposing mutant leaders, but it's Hugh Jackman's hard-as-nails Wolverine who manages to steal the show as he fights evil as well as human prejudice.

www2.x-men-the-movie.com/index.html *Excellent site with a vast array of interactive goodies.*

MUSIC ALBUM OF THE MONTH

In from the Cold!

John Mullen gets a warm feeling from chart-toppers Coldplay



Coldplay

Parachutes **PARLOPHONE** ★★★★★

The natural successors to Travis in terms of their legendary niceness and the impeccable strength of their tunes, Coldplay are truly a band you could take home to visit your mum. Not that they can't kick up a racket when they want to – *Yellow* is like Pavement at their most pleasantly deranged, while *Shiver* conjures up the ghost of the much-lamented Jeff Buckley. The only worry is that with a debut album this strong, where on earth can Coldplay go from here?

www.coldplay.com *Lovingly designed site with plenty of input from the band themselves, who contribute exclusive snaps and an online diary.*

MUSIC NEW RELEASES

New Order

BBC Radio One Live In Concert
STRANGE FRUIT ★★★★★

Recorded at Glastonbury in 1987, this is the sound of a band finally making the leap from guitars and amps to synths and drum machines. An epic version of *Sister Ray* reminds you of the band's gloomy Goth origins, but it's the poppy likes of *Age Of Consent* that entertain – along with Barney Sumner's grumpy stage asides.

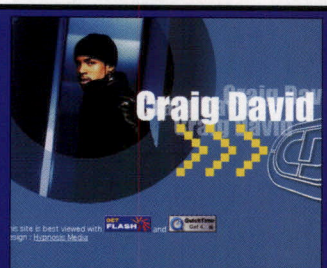
slashmc.rice.edu/ceremony/neworder/neworder.html
Has a guide to the messages on Joy Division and NO run-out grooves.

kd lang

Invincible Summer **WARNERS** ★★★

People always go on about how great kd lang is, but unless you're a devoted fan it's hard to name any of her songs except *Constant Craving*. Here, as usual, she showcases her fantastic voice, but bar *Love's Great Ocean* it's noticeably lacking in tunes. Then again, what do we know? We're still waiting for the great Dolly Parton comeback record.

www.kdlang.com
Excellent official site containing a store where you can purchase an utterly essential lang beanie hat.



Craig David

Born To Do It **WILD STAR** ★★★★

Only a heartless fool could resist the lure of speed garage. Space-age production, top-class tunes, school-yard lyrics – it's got the lot. And you know that every song from this album is going to be a single, so you might as well learn to love gorgeous dance-floor fillers like *Rendezvous* and *Walking Away*. Go on, admit you love Mr David. Resistance is futile.

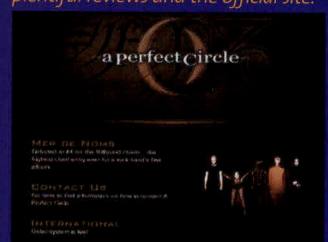
www.craigdavid.co.uk
Official site where you get to meet fellow David fans and discuss the exact meaning of the words 'Bo selecta!'

A Perfect Circle

Mer De Noms **VIRGIN** ★★★★

The side-project of Tool growler Maynard James Keenan, this is metal for people who find the likes of Korn and Limp Bizkit a bit challenging. With commendably retro riffs and the kind of deep-throated vocals that suggest the involvement of Barry White, only the vague suspicion that this could have been crafted at any time in the last 20 years stops it from being a balls-to-the-wall masterpiece. Grrr!

toolshed.down.net/more/circle
Compact fan site for those with short attention spans, with links to plentiful reviews and the official site.



PICTURES: RETNA, ANGELA LUBRANO

MUSIC Q&A

A-HA – BUT IT'S NO JOKE

JJ72 singer Mark Greaney reveals his love for 80s Norwegian bands

What are you up to at the moment?
We're on holiday! We've just come off tour with the Dandy Warhols, who were complete stoners but very nice. We're looking forward to the album coming out now.

You'll be pleased to know we've given it four stars (see below). Now, do you have a big input into your own site (*www.jj72.com*)?
Oh yeah. We decide what images to put up there and how it should look. We didn't want it to come over like a stereotypical indie site; we wanted it to be a bit more stylish. It's also got plenty of personal touches. There's one of my mother's paintings of a church in the background and lots of silly stuff – like an aeroplane just because our drummer, Fergal, loves flying!

What do you think about the controversy over Napster and the potential for music piracy?
I could be shooting myself in the foot here, but I don't think it's a real problem. We use MP3s on our site – it's a good way of letting new people listen to our stuff. And the Net has done a lot for music. We get loads of emails from people saying how much they enjoyed our gigs, which is brilliant because it's always a bit uncomfortable to approach a band just after a show.

What are your favourite sites?
Band and music ones, mainly. I love reading about my all-time favourite group, Joy Division, and I've just got into A-ha through their greatest hits, so I look at their sites. No, I'm not joking about A-ha – we're even thinking about covering *Take On Me* in the future.

GIG GUIDE

In case festival fatigue hasn't yet set in...

BULLDOG BASH 2000
Therapy?, Fun Lovin' Criminals and Alabama 3, supported by a strip-show. A barrel of laughs.
August 10-13 Long Marston, Avon Park Raceway
www.bulldog-bash.co.uk

ALL SAINTS
Not expected to be performing skits from *Honest*.
August 12 Nottingham, Wollaton Park
www.schaling.com/allsaints

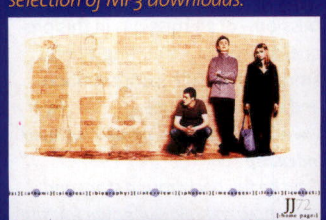
V2000
Get out your pipe and slippers for Richard Ashcroft, Paul Weller, Ocean Colour Scene and flavour of the month, Travis.
August 19-20 Staffordshire, Weston Park and Chelmsford, Hylands Park
ds.dial.pipex.com/a.j.warn/v2000/index.htm

GLASGOW FESTIVAL
IN THE CITY
Buckie-fuelled event with a rockin' good line-up, including the likes of Stereophonics, Oasis, Paul Weller, Beck and Elastica. Oh, and Shed Seven.
August 25-26 Glasgow Green
www.glasgowgreen.com

CARLING WEEKEND – READING/LEEDS FESTIVALS
By far the greatest array of talent of the summer, with Oasis, Primal Scream, Muse, Stereophonics and Pulp all fighting for supremacy.
August 25-28 Reading Richfield Ave/ Leeds Temple Newsam
www.leedsfestival.co.uk and ***www.readingfestival.com***

CREAMFIELDS ENGLAND
Put your hand in the air like you just don't care with 'alternative' favourites Basement Jaxx, Death In Vegas and Moloko.
August 26 Liverpool, Old Speke Airfield
www.cream.co.uk

JJ72
JJ72 **LAKOTA** ★★★★
A welcome dark cloud for these bright summer days. JJ72's average age might only be 19 but they create music that is sublimely timeless. Moving between plaintive acoustic ballads like *Willow* and full-on rock anthems such as single *Oxygen*, it's so dynamically thrilling that it makes their peers sound like seven-stone weaklings. Proof positive that not everything from Dublin has to sound like bloody U2.
www.jj72.com
This site contains everything you could possibly need to know about this hotly-tipped trio, with a generous selection of MP3 downloads.



Jon Carter
7 Live #1 **SEVEN** ★★★★
Two CDs of thumping house choons so heavy they make Carl Cox sound like Westlife – so not really music for people who only buy a couple of house compilations a year. With an ingenious array of breakbeats and knowing nods to old-skool masters like Frankie Bones, this is a commendable, rump-stirring alternative to Fatboy Slim and his cheesy ilk.
techno.de/mixmag
No decent Carter site yet, so why not read about the world of white gloves and Vick's Vapo-Rub at Mixmag's *official site?*

Julian Cope
Floored Genius 3
HEAD HERITAGE ★★★
This collection isn't perhaps the best starting point for those uninitiated in the ways of Cope, a genuine eccentric. A rag-bag of oddities and unreleased material from 1978-1998, there are a few choice treats here, including a truly strange version of the Stones' *Satisfaction*. Fun for obsessives, but otherwise head straight for the first two volumes of the collection.
www.juliancope.com
Focusing on the great man's interests in all things pagan and antiquarian, this is not the place to go if you just want to get the words to World Shut Your Mouth.

Even Viking ballets were bloodbaths

GAME OF THE MONTH

Rune

Rune shies away from the bog-standard Tolkien mythology that all too many role-playing PC games thrive on, opting instead for the bloody, violent heritage of the Vikings – a scenario much better suited to third-person gaming. You play Ragnar, a young warrior setting out into a world rich with tradition, mythology and 'Dark Vikings' hell-bent on wiping you out. The visuals are simply stunning, while the multi-player option simply requires that you fight like a wildcat without having to worry about all that problem-solving mullarkey.

www.3dap.com/ragnarok ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD *Check out the game developer's diary, chat with like-minded Norsemen and download patches as they become available.*

GAMES

Rune for the hills!

The month's best games releases – and their Web sites

Baldur's Gate II

This is the one everybody has been waiting for. The original *Baldur's Gate* was the PC RPG of choice when it was released but with anticipation running high for this sequel, some people are bound to be disappointed, no matter how great it is. *Shadow of Amn* picks up where the original left off, but with more focus on narrative and better locations.

bg2temple.iplaygames.com ★★★★

Everything the official site offers, plus a sense of humour.

Blair Witch Project

The point of the *Blair Witch* trilogy of PC games is – just like the movie – to scare the pants off you. *The Rustin Parr Investigation* is the first instalment, and should do a good job. Anybody who saw the movie knows that Parr was convicted of the murder of seven children – now find out if he was really guilty.

www.godgames.com/games/blair ★★★

The Web played a crucial role in the success of the Blair Witch movie. Can this site do the same for the games?

Championship Manager 00/01 Update

After a season of transfer wrangling brought about by Euro 2000 fever, *Championship Manager* aficionados will be champing at the bit to get the new player stats onto their PCs. Once the Rebrovs have been sorted from the Suttons, they'll be able to return to their bedroom dugouts in peace. Unfortunately they'll have to wait until 2002 for *Championship Manager 4*, which promises online multiplayer gaming.

www.thedugout.net ★★★★

There are hints, tips, news items and a selection of Dream Teams for you to add to via this fine site.

Hitman: Codename 47

Here's your opportunity to slip on a pair of black leather gloves and start taking people out for money. No, not as an escort, but with a high-powered sniper's rifle. Interested? So are we. It looks great too, and if the patience-is-a-virtue rather than all-guns-blazing approach appeals, then your PC is in for a treat.

www.hitmancodename47.com/index.htm ★★★

You'll get the opportunity to case the game thoroughly before parting with your blood money.

Star Trek: New Worlds

This latest instalment in the *Star Trek* PC-game franchise sets you down on alien planets to start up colonies. You can play as the Federation, the Klingons or the Romulans, and you'll need to adapt to the moral codes of whichever you choose. So tread carefully if you're human, remember family honour if you're a Klingon, but kill everything if you're Romulan.

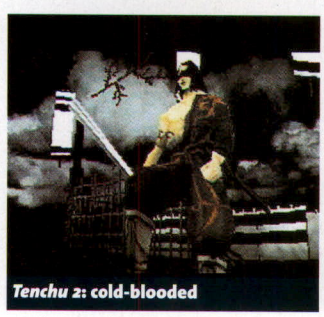
www.interplay.com/stnewworlds ★★★★

The official site of the latest Trekkie delight lets you check out screenshots and game information before setting phasers for stun.

***Baldur's Gate II*: 'focused'**

***Hitman*: looking great**

***Star Trek*: colonise alien worlds**


***Tenchu 2*: cold-blooded**

Sydney 2000

Remember bashing the bejesus out of your fingertips with the original arcade *Track and Field*? Now you can do it again, but this time in the comfort of your own home with PlayStation, N64, PC, Dreamcast or GameBoy Color. Various competition modes and the biggest choice of Olympian events ever to grace a game means that *Sydney 2000* should be a Gold Medal-winner.

www.olympics.com/eng ★★★

Get the feel of the real-life games before getting stuck into a bedroom recreation of the next Olympics.

Tenchu 2: Birth of the Stealth Assassins

The plot of this PlayStation release is as complicated as a Kurosawa movie. You play a young ninja with a mission – or 29 missions in this pre-quel to *Tenchu* – requiring a hefty amount of stealth, concentration and cold-bloodedness.

www.activision.com/games/tenchu2/index.asp ★★★

Get the full background story and learn how to build your own fan site from this official offering.

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN

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Honestly, there is *some* comedy...

13 SUN Time for a bit of culture

Edinburgh Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland, 13 August-2 Sept

The world's largest arts festival opens its doors once more for this annual culture-and-laughter fest. Since its inception in 1947 the event has just grown and grown, and today the main Edinburgh Festival also encompasses a military tattoo, jazz, film and book festivals and, of course, the fringe festival. Some natives do stay put, but the smart ones think of this as an ideal time to take a holiday...

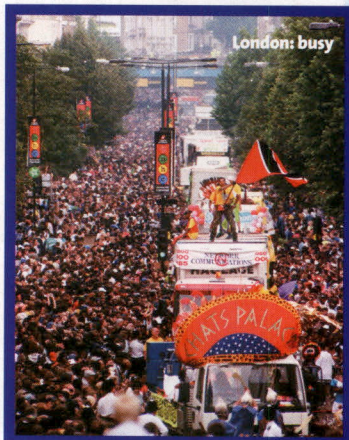
www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk

2 SAT Tartan sports

Royal Highland Games, Braemar, Scotland, 2 September

Fancy a break north of the border but can't bear the luvvies and cappucino atmosphere of Edinburgh? Then try the Highland Games instead. The games have been going strong for over 183 years, and it's not just a bunch of Scotsmen tossing giant logs. There's also an inter-services tug-of-war championship and a medley relay race – with a few reels thrown in for good measure.

www.braemargathering.org


London: busy

26 SAT Carnivaaal!

Notting Hill, London, 26-28 August

Yup, that weekend in August has come round once again. It's the time of year when West Londoners dress up and shake their booty, bemused American tourists wander through the streets looking for Hugh Grant's front door and smiling coppers are photographed 'getting down'. It's all fuelled by a potent combination of dodgy food stands, Red Stripe, lukewarm Coke, portable toilets and, of course, the ubiquitous Radio 1 Live stage. Make sure you pack a whistle – earplugs are optional.

www.nottinghillcarnival.net.uk

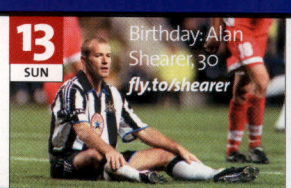
9 AUGUST – 7 SEPTEMBER

AUG 9 WEDNESDAY
Birthday: Gillian Anderson, 31 ***www.celebs.cz/gillian/english***
Birthday: Melanie Griffith, 43 ***www.go.com/webdir/?tid=22053***

10 THUR
Birthday: Antonio Banderas, 40 ***www.antoniobanderas.net/index2.htm***
Golf: British Masters ***www.sky.com/sports/golf***

11 FRI
Enid Blyton born, 1897 ***www.blytonweb.co.uk/***
Pokemon 2 released ***www.pokemon.com***

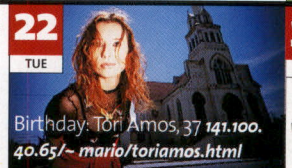
12 SAT
Birthday: Pete Sampras, 29 ***www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Pressbox/2629/sampras.html***
The 'Glorious Twelfth' ***www.richsport.mcmail.com/grouse.htm***

13 SUN

Birthday: Alan Shearer, 30 ***fly.to/shearer***

19 SAT
Birthday: Matthew Perry, 31 ***www.seekeasy.net/d/Matthew_Perry***
V2000 starts ***dialspace.dial.pipex.com/town/place/xajo6/v2000***

20 SUN
Birthday: Don King, 69 ***www.swcollege.com/BookTour/don_king.html***
Bon Jovi play Wembley Stadium ***www.bonjovi.com***

21 MON
Birthday: Dina Carroll, 32 ***www.dinacarroll.co.uk/***
Birthday: Barry Norman, 67 ***www.sky.com/news/showbiz/filmnight.htm***

22 TUE

Birthday: Tori Amos, 37 ***141.100.40.65/~mario/toriamos.html***

23 WED
William Wallace hanged, drawn and quartered in 1305 ***www.mcallister.com/clan/wallace.html***

29 TUE
Birthday: Michael Jackson, 42 ***www.mjnet.com***
Beatles played their last live gig in San Francisco, 1966 ***user.pa.net/~strawser***

30 WED
Birthday: Cameron Diaz, 28 ***www.cameron-diaz.com***
US Open tennis championship begins ***www.usopen.org***

31 THUR
Birthday: Van Morrison, 55 ***http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/~hayward/van/index.html***
Princess Diana died, 1997 ***www.geocities.com/Wellesley/6226***

SEPT 1 FRIDAY
Wreckage of the *Titanic* discovered in the Atlantic, 1985 ***www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/main_ie.shtml***

2 SAT
Birthday: Lennox Lewis, 34 ***www.lennox-lewis.com***
Japan surrenders to the Allied forces, 1945 (VJ Day) ***www.royal.gov.uk/history/war1.htm#WAR3***

WORDS: OLIVER HARKNESS; PICTURES: PA, LIAISON, RETINA, EMPICS

Mrs Icarus wisely stuck to street level

14 MON
Birthday: Halle Berry, 32 ***energy4life.com/Black Women/HALLEBERRY***

Tribute concert to the Bee Gees ***www.beegeesfanclub.org***

15 TUE
Birthday: Ben Affleck, 28 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/3686/ben.html***

163 years of British rule in India ended in 1947 ***swaraj.net/iffw/profiles/gandhi_mk.htm***

16 WED
Birthday: Ulrika Jonsson, 33 ***wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk/david.mcmanus/ujons.htm***

Elvis died aged 42 in 1977 ***www.elvispresley.com/king***

17 THUR
Birthday: Robert De Niro, 57 ***deniro.virtualave.net***

Fourth Test: England vs the West Indies ***www.sky.com/sports/cricket***

18 FRI
Birthday: Robert Redford, 63 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Highrise/7459/robertredford.html***

X Men released ***www.columbia.edu/~djs58/comics/chars.html***

24 THUR
Birthday: Yasser Arafat, 71 ***www.abcnews.go.com/reference/bios/arafat.html***

Vesuvius buries Pompeii, 79AD ***www.eliki.com/ancient***

25 FRI
Birthday: Claudia Schiffer, 30 ***www.toptown.com/dorms/grendel/claudia.htm***

26 SAT
Birthday: Macaulay Culkin, 20 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Cinema/6998/reviews/H/homealone.html***

27 SUN
Mother Teresa born, 1910 ***www.gargaro.com/mother_teresa***

Belgian Grand Prix ***www.formula1.com***

28 MON
Birthday: Shania Twain, 35 ***www.shaniatwain.com***

Martin Luther King gave his 'I have a dream' speech, 1963 ***web66.coled.umn.edu/new/MLK/MLK.html***

3 SUN
Birthday: Charlie Sheen, 35 ***members.tripod.com/vonneg20***

Richard the Lionheart crowned King of England, 1189 ***www.ping.at/kessler***

4 MON
Birthday: Kevin Kennedy, 39 ***www.g-wizz.net/coronationstreet***

5 TUE
Freddie Mercury born, 1946 ***www.freddie.ru:8080***

Birthday: Raquel Welch, 60 ***www.bomis.com/rings/raquelwelch/6***

6 WED
Birthday: Tim Henman, 26 ***www.henmagic.freeserve.co.uk***

Birthday: Greg Rusedski, 27 ***sports.yahoo.com/ten/news/rusedski99.html***

7 THUR
Birthday: Chrissie Hynde, 40 ***www.info-please.com/ipea/A0771192.html***

Golf: European Masters ***www.sky.com/sports/golf***

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Dear thenet,

Thanks for your feature on using the Internet to make you famous. I have no desire to be famous myself, you understand, but there was just one comment that made my day: when Ernesto Schmitt of Peoplesound complained that he can't actually realise his Internet millions for 10 years. So, all these dotcom millionaires aren't quite as rich as we're all lead to believe. That's nice to know. And seeing as Boo.com has already gone down the pan, there's surely more to follow in the fast-moving world of the Internet. Maybe a hatful of these dotcom millionaires will never get their hands on the cash. If so, my faith in human nature is restored.

I may be skint, but at least what money I have is in my wallet.

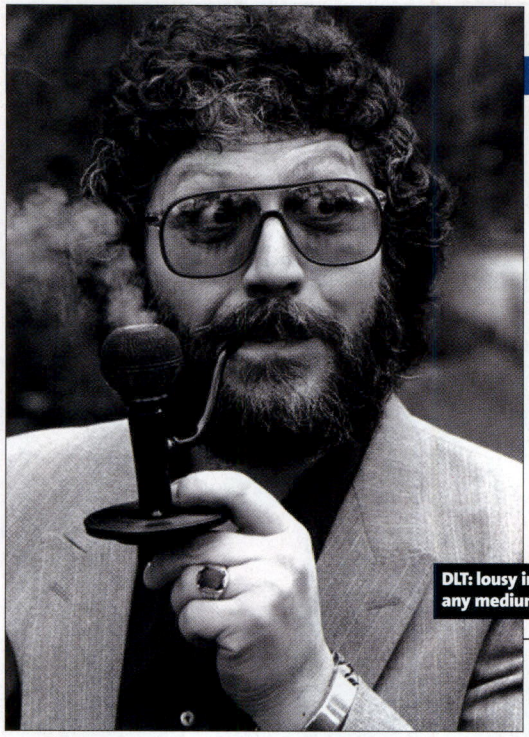
Ben,
Liverpool
Not that you're bitter, of course...

Dear thenet,

I think that Terra, the company responsible for hosting the *Big Brother* Web site (***www.channel4.com/bigbrother***), have done an appalling job. Surely they realised in advance the sheer number of people who would log on to the site, yet it remains unbelievably slow. Tonight when I tried to visit it, I was met with a Javascript error.

Thankfully, as a Web developer, I knew how to get round it, but for others I am sure this must be a problem. Finally, let's say that, like me, you own a Mac. Try viewing the Web site with IE5 and it doesn't work. What a surprise! Nice one, Terra. Thankfully, it does work in Netscape. And after all that, what I've seen isn't even that interesting. Who wants to see a load of people sit around and swear at each other?

Matt Flood, via email



DLT: lousy in any medium

READER'S LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dear thenet,

I read with interest your article on Internet radio (August 2000). True, there are thousands of stations now online and it's certainly interesting to listen to sounds from the other side of the world (it's also a lot more entertaining than waking up to Chris Evans). But I fail to see where the audience for these new Net-only stations is going to come from. Booting up your PC is far more difficult than switching on your stereo, and the frequently patchy sound quality and 'buffering' problems don't help. Worst of all, it costs money (unless you're tuning in as a background to your regular surfing). Is it just me or is the idea of marrying the Web to traditional radio a slightly unnatural concept? Could this be yet another example of investors rushing to back anything Web-related without really thinking it through?

James Wilson
Leicester

Dear thenet,

Is the purpose of a Web site not to offer customer access 24/7? Have you heard of a Web site that closes? I have! Visit ***www.thetrainline.com*** at 11.30pm for four and a half hours of 'Thank you for visiting our site. The site is currently unavailable due to a scheduled close. This site is not available from approximately 23.30 to approximately 04.00 GMT/BST each day, try again later.'

So much for e-commerce!

Martin Hinshelwood,
via email

'Is it straight now, love?'

Dear thenet,

You must be the only mag ever to comment on *The Wicker Man* without referring to Britt Ekland's unforgettable butt-naked 'wall-and-body slapping' war dance.

Robin Petherbridge
ROBINP@creativep.freeserve.co.uk
That's blown it (see above).

MAIL MONKEY Lets it all hang out

From: **mailmonkey@chimp.co.uk**
Sent: Wednesday July 20, 2000
To: controller@channelfour.co.uk
Subject: Who wants to be a millionaire

Dear Sir,

Been a bit of a quiet month round these parts: I haven't been able to get out much since they fitted the tag. Still, the enforced period indoors has given me the chance to catch up on some quality telly, most notably that 'revealing' game show featuring Cheggers on Channel 5. Further evidence that celebs are treated differently to the rest of us when it comes to indecent exposure, as anyone who recalls my own impromptu cameo on *Question Time* will readily attest. Dimbleby still has nightmares, apparently. Serves him right.

Anyway, I happened to catch the recent *E-millionaire Show* being aired on your usually upstanding channel. There used to be quite a few 'e-millionaires' round my neck of the woods (until the Met crackdown, anyway), so I watched with interest. And what did I see? A scrawny collection of students and ne'er-do-wells scrambling for cash in a most undignified manner.

Now if you'd come to me in the first place, I'd have furnished you with a hatful of Web site ideas that'd blow your half-arsed attempts out of the water. What you need to do is sell people something. How about holidays? Everyone's doing it, but nobody lets you book one day and leave the next. Laugh if you like, but if you don't do it Branson will, and you tangle with a beard at your peril.

I'd have thought you'd have learned by now that my ideas can improve your ratings. Vaughan was selling hooky bananas from the back of a Transit before I got my hands on him. Brook was working in my local bakery before I sampled her baps. Not to mention the numerous other Channel 4 stars who owe me a living – a fact acknowledged by Aniston in her recent correspondence which read: 'If you don't stop calling me I shall notify the appropriate authorities.' Celebs, eh?

Yours in light entertainment,

Mail monkey

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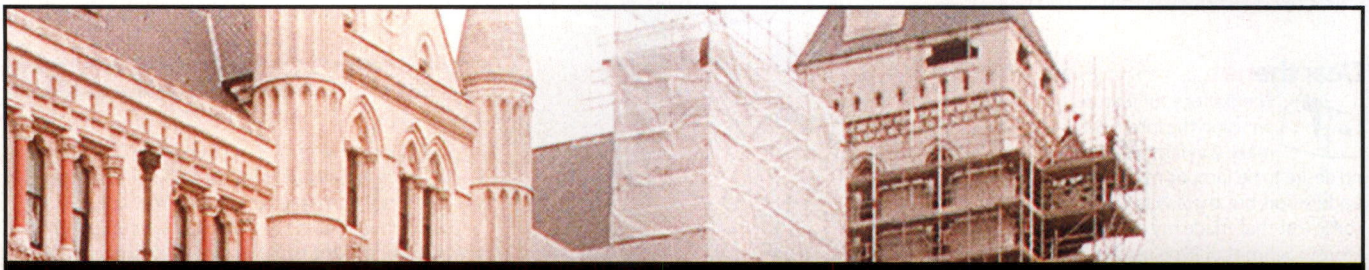
Each letter published wins a PC World Healthcheck – the MOT service for your PC. It includes diagnostic and anti-virus checks, plus a complete valet inside and out, worth £39.99.

PICTURE: KOBAL COLLECTION/PA



'What did you learn today, poppet?'

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'I've been looking for a long time to find a band via MP3 – and I haven't found one yet'

SLEEPING WITH THE NME

No14 NME.COM www.nme.com

Success can be a double-edged sword, especially when you have to replicate it in another medium. But when NME.com editor Anthony Thornton was handed the job of taking take the world's biggest music paper online, he knuckled down and got on with the job. Now the site's drawing 1.2m visits per month and, like the British bands it champions, it's challenging the US music giants on their own territory...

The *NME*'s a big, inky newspaper. How did you go about putting it on the Web?
There were loads of difficulties. Big interviews don't translate well to the Net, where people want an easy read. Long reviews would also be quite hard to follow. Instead, we do things like instant reviews. When we covered the first gig of Radiohead's world tour from Arles, we filed three reports on the night and had photos up within 30 minutes. When Blur played a new song at a gig, we had a review of it on the site in half an hour. At Glastonbury, we were editing together a five-minute video report every three hours, featuring interviews with Travis, Embrace, Doves, Rolf Harris – all the greats!

Were there problems in convincing people on the paper to get involved with the site?
On the whole, the reception's been warm. People have mucked in. Luckily, we have a very active office – emails are fired around and it soon got going. In fact, the old-school journalists have become Web evangelists – we knew we'd get 'em in the end!

With the site such a success, what's going to happen to the 'dead tree' *NME*?
We think of the relationship as being like that between *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. *The Observer* comes out on Sunday with an overview of the week's news as it's been covered by *The Guardian*, but it also breaks its own news stories. Music papers aren't having the best time of it at the minute, but NME.com is breaking new markets – in the USA, for instance, where most music fans have never heard of the *NME*. Nearly half our users come from abroad. There are bands we're now seen as the world authority on, like Blur, Radiohead, Nirvana...

What do you put the site's success down to?
Authority in news. We upload 17 or 18 news items per day. We don't get stories from PA or any other of the big news agencies responsible for so much repeated content – we go and get it ourselves. There's also a lot of interaction and an amazing sense of community around NME.com – people connect to it far more than other sites. You can get personalised emails with news on your favourite bands, and we were the first site to let you mail a story to a friend – a move which everybody has now copied.

Has NME.com been tempted to move into covering MP3 tracks?
I've been looking for a long time to discover a new band via MP3 – and I haven't found one yet. If you go in a record shop, 98 per cent of the stock is terrible; MP3 is a thousand times bigger – and worse. But that doesn't mean we're not looking. We're still in the pubs and clubs all the time, looking for the best bands. People think they can stick their MP3 on a site and suddenly be discovered as the new U2, but it isn't going to happen. I think the only way someone will get famous through MP3 is if they comes up with something so catchy that everyone will email it on. There are some sites promising the world to bands – I think that's incredibly cruel.

Are the people who look at the Web site into different music to those who read the paper?
Our readers tend to have much broader taste, because when you go to the site you're not 'buying into' a product. We did a competition to win CDs, and people were asking for Britney Spears! Some of the site's visitors are fans of Robbie Williams or All Saints, and wouldn't necessarily buy the paper. Also, the site tends to get slightly older readers, perhaps because people log on at work; and, of course, there are the 'classic covers' which you can send as e-cards, plus quotes going back to 1977. We're going to extend that back to the 50s for those classic Elvis quotes.

Finally, what plans have you got for the site?
There are all sorts of exciting things in the pipeline – stuff that has never been done before. Keep your eye on our coverage of the Reading and Leeds festivals this summer: we'll be doing a special site with one-off sessions and video interviews – hefty interaction. And in general, we'll simply continue to innovate and pull back ground from competing American music sites.

NME.COM *Rock on!*

WHAT IS IT? The online version of the world's biggest-selling weekly rock music newspaper.
LAUNCHED July 1996.
TRAFFIC 1.2m visitors per month.
BASE South Bank, London.
KEY FEATURES Up-to-the-minute news, reviews, video reports, comprehensive gig guide, personalised email, message boards, online ticket sales.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE ORINO

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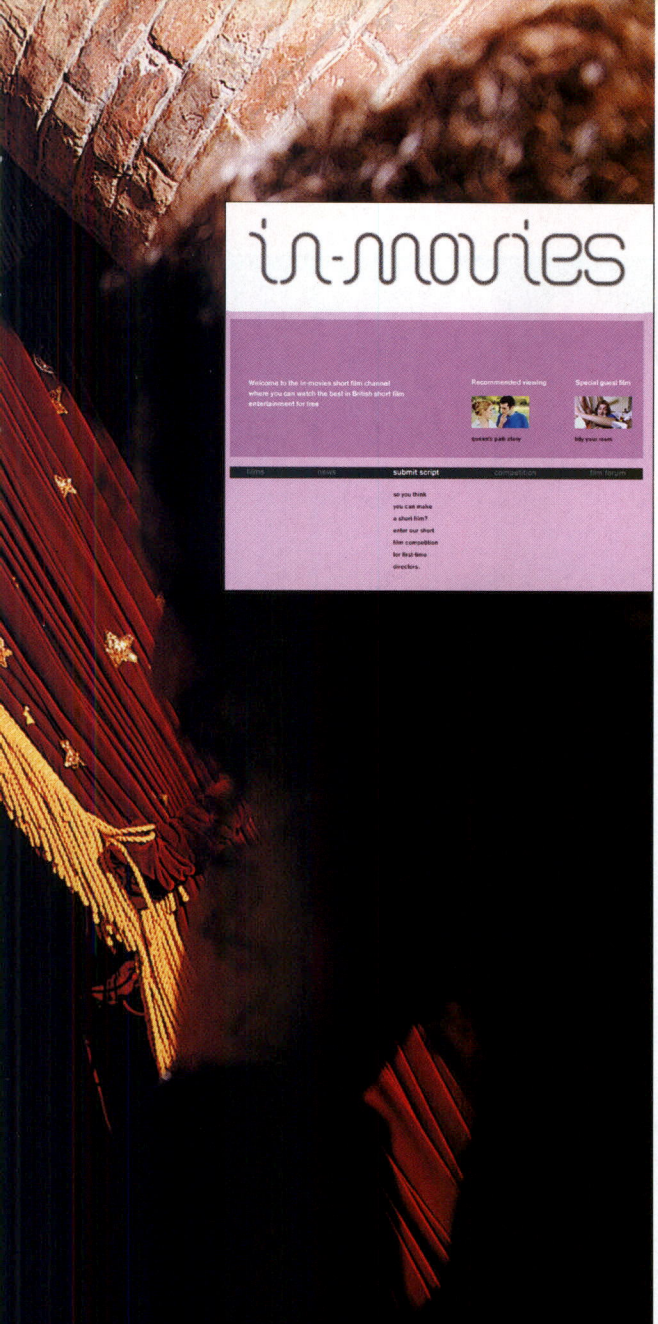

WE LIKE SHORT SHORTS

Original films on your desktop

IN-MOVIES

www.in-movies.com

It's a sign of how the Internet has evolved: a year ago, entrepreneurs wanted to provide information centres; nowadays the talk is of multimedia channels. Take Laurence Penn, founder of short-film showcase In-movies.

'There's going to be a convergence between computers, home entertainment and TV,' predicts Laurence, 'and I'd like to be one of the channels people use to watch shorts, features and information on new releases.'

It's a big aim, but In-movies is slowly growing, with 130 (and rising) downloadable films ranging from one to 15 minutes in length. And Laurence knows where there's an untapped source...

'There are a lot of good films nobody ever sees. The Net's a way to put them out'

'There are about 10,000 short films made each year, maybe 800 in the UK,' reveals Laurence. 'They don't get shown to the public except for the odd one on Channel 4 or BBC2, so there are a lot of good films nobody ever sees. The Net seemed the obvious way to put them out and let people watch them.'

A short-maker himself, Laurence saw the potential to help out an underfunded medium. 'We approached film-makers to ask for permission to show [their work] on our Web site in exchange for a small fee. We don't pay a huge amount but, for most short film-makers, it's unheard of.'

Like most unsigned-band MP3 sites, In-movies only takes Internet rights, often non-exclusive. Unlike most of those MP3 sites, however, there's stringent quality control. 'We see ourselves as a channel in the same way Channel 4 doesn't show everything it's sent,' explains Laurence. 'We have a strong editorial policy. Besides which, you can have too many films on your site. I think you can blind people with quantity.'

Exercising restraint isn't harming site impressions, though; In-movies is already getting 4,000 hits per day without any publicity except word of mouth from the film-makers themselves – who are, Laurence reveals, 'great self-publicists'.

Among those Laurence tips for greatness are Farren Blackburn and Barney Cokeliss, but the next generation along could get a leg-up from a new In-movies film competition. 'Send in your scripts,' pleads Laurence – even though an earlier request garnered '150 ideas in a fortnight'.

Understandably, Laurence can't wait for ADSL and the like to afford visitors better downloads. 'Broadband is the Holy Grail. The quality of our films is very high, with very good production values and good directors, and the quality will show more under broadband.' Anybody know of a Web site which delivers popcorn?

The beauty of basing a site on something you love is that you know what people need

YOU'RE HAVIN' A LARF! Stand up for live comedy

COMEDY ONLINE

www.comedyonline.co.uk

It's not often you find a Web site that makes you want to turn your computer off, but that's the thinking behind Comedy Online, which is designed to drag you out to visit the nation's comedy clubs.

The concept behind the site came as three chuckle-loving chums surfed in vain for an evening out. Marketing director Liz Sinclair explains: 'We used to use the Internet to sort out our entertainment and there wasn't any one place to find comedy events.'

The beauty of basing a site on something you love is that you know what people need. 'We assume people go on to the Internet to plan their weekend – just like us,' explains site designer Darren Thomas.

However, don't visit the site expecting a list of gags. From the start, Liz, Darren and technical whiz Rob Lyall have stuck to advertising nights out rather than going for jokey content. 'We're not Funny Online,' as Darren puts it. 'We promote an activity.' And the stand-up comedians have shown their appreciation...

'They love the site,' beams Liz. 'They all use the Internet, but not many have their own sites. As a sideline we've agreed to do a site for one act!'

So where on the Web would these comedy connoisseurs recommend the professionals go for a chuckle? 'TV Go Home (***www.tvgohome.com***) is great,' says Darren, 'and Comedy Butchers (***www.comedybutchers.com***) is weird.'

'I like unintentionally funny sites, like mad religious ones,' interjects Rob.

But not everything on the site is light-hearted – debates rage across the pages on subjects from heckling to overcharging. As Rob says, 'We try to build a community, with members writing in and reviewing. That's why we held a live event, to give something to the members.'

The success of that night – a sell-out gig at the Cosmic Comedy Club in Hammersmith – has convinced the trio that Comedy Online may soon be able to make the leap from being a hobby to a business. 'Unlike other Web sites, we didn't get capital,' explains Liz. 'We started it slowly and found that the potential is there to make money.'

It's going down a storm...

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO

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FISHY MOUSE MAT £7.50 *www.waltonskues.co.uk*

FLOATS £1 each *www.banksidefishing.co.uk*

WADERS £29.99 *www.banksidefishing.co.uk*

RIVER REEL £18.99 *www.anglinguk.net/acatalog/Swiftys*
SEA REEL £59.99 *www.banksidefishing.co.uk*

LURE £4.99 *www.banksidefishing.co.uk*

TACKLE BOX AND SEAT £14.99 *www.argos.co.uk*

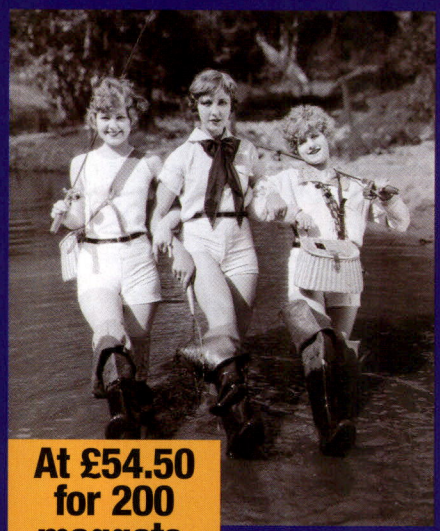
ULTIMATE BASS FISHIN'
$22.99 *www.etoys.com*

FLIES 60p each *www.angling uk.net/acatalog/Swiftys*

CARP HOOKS £2.95 (for 10) LEADS 65p CONTROLLER £3.15 *www.fishing-direct.co.uk*

FISHY BUSINESS

Need new tackle? Run out of bait? Then trawl the Net for your angling requisites



MP3, sex, Cindy Margolis and er... fishing? You might not expect to find this sedentary sport well represented online – after all, sitting on a riverbank in the great outdoors is the antithesis to surfing the Web in a darkened room. However, the most casual of searches shows that the Internet is alive and positively wriggling with sites devoted to all things fishy.

Head for the links section at *www.fishing-tackle-online.co.uk*, for instance, and you'll be presented with a mass of sites covering every species and fishing genre under the sea (or river), from crappie to carp, salmon to shark, fly-fishing in deepest Patagonia to ice-fishing in Alaska.

And when it comes to buying your tackle and gear online, you shouldn't want for anything. We began our hunt at some of the excellent UK Webrings and magazine sites, such as *www.fishing.co.uk*, *www.services-online.co.uk/angling* and *www.anglinguk.net*. The list of sites below is but a fraction of our morning's haul.

At £54.50 for 200 maggots, it was clear they weren't bred as bait

Sadly, it did fall short at digging up where we could buy half a pound of maggots online. We found a site where you could buy them for biosurgery (*www.smtl.co.uk/wmprc/biosurgery/ordering/index.html*), but at £54.50 for a pot of 200 it was clear they weren't bred as bait.

NB: Prices refer to those on the respective Web sites and are not necessarily recommended retail prices of the products featured.

HOW THE SITES COMPARE

ARGOS *www.argos.co.uk*
Head for the sports and pastimes section – not a huge range but good starter kits for kids and generally inexpensive. ★★★

BANKSIDE FISHING TACKLE *www.banksidefishing.co.uk*
Coarse, carp, sea, fly, pole and match-fishing tackle – the lot, and great discounts to be had. It even includes a weather report. ★★★★

GLASGOW ANGLING CENTRE *www.fishingmegastore.com*
Claims to match lower prices anywhere offered on goods they sell; also has useful links to supplier sites. ★★★★

HOOKED TACKLE & BAIT *www.fishing-direct.com*
Good range of gear and you can even buy bait online – the fish must die happy after a chunk of whisky-flavoured Nutrabait. ★★★★

SWIFTY'S TACKLE *www.anglinguk.net/acatalog/Swiftys*
Good prices on rods and reels and check out the monthly special offers and the What's New section. ★★★★

THE TACKLEBOX *www.thetacklebox.co.uk*
Has just gone online with a limited selection of tackle, books and videos; hopefully more to come soon. ★★★★

WALTON & SKUES *www.waltonskues.co.uk*
If you're looking for a 'The Way to a Man's Heart is through his Fly' hat, this is the place. Fishy gifts plus a limited range of tackle and gear. ★★★

WOMEN IN WADERS *www.womeninwaders.com*
Something for the garage wall – find more merchandise on a similar theme at this US site. ★★★

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, KOBAL

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KYLIE SPINS OUT ANOTHER SITE

Kylie's Web site, like the songbird herself, is ever-evolving. We talk to Webmaster Chris McGrail

She might small but she's the mother of re-invention, and when Kylie Minogue came spinning back onto the pop scene in July, rocketing to number one in the charts, it also signalled a new phase in the Aussie star's online development.

Although ***www.kylie.com*** is currently described as a 'microsite' by Kylie's Webmaster of choice, Chris McGrail of London new media design group Kleber, it's part of a bigger online development of the Australian star. It was based around the single *Spinning Around* and featured a Kylie screensaver which fans downloaded an estimated 70,000 times.

When the next single, *On a Night Like This*, is released on the Parlophone label on September 11 (the album, *Light Years*, follows on September 25), the site will receive its next update. But unlike many stars who merely pay lip service to their sites (even if they claim to be 'heavily involved' in development), Kylie really does get stuck into the creation of hers. In fact, she practically designed her original site (the '20th Century' official version), still up and running at ***www.kylie.com/kylieultra.html***.

'It was all Kylie's idea,' recalls McGrail. 'KylieUltra was started 18 months before the *Impossible Princess* album. She came in with some reference material [which included Manga comics], showing the sort of designs she was looking for. Eventually, we found the illustrator, Joe Berger, who did a fantastic job at not only executing the illustrations but delivering them to us in a Web-friendly format. Myself, Joe and Kylie then worked very closely to ensure that it represented her in the way she wished.

'She was probably more clued up than most recording artists, and had a very strong idea of how she wanted to be represented. Indeed, even before the very first meeting, she had already done the photoshoot for "Dress Kylie".' McGrail concludes, 'She'd probably get a very good job as an art director.'

In the Dress Kylie section, visitors can literally put different outfits on the cartoon Kylie. For KylieUltra, she also went snapping around with a digital camera and uploaded several hidden pictures in the Cats section.

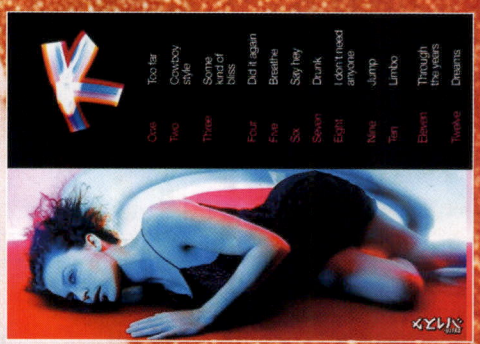
So what next for Kylie.com? Plans include a lot more community-based material (there's already a forum which has attracted a mass of messages from fans) and there will also be much more audio and video. 'Not necessarily just clips of Kylie's music, but a whole range of Kylie content making good use of today's streaming capabilities,' says McGrail. 'The rest of the site will carry written content, extensive community facilities... and, of course, Dress Kylie 2.'

REINVENT YOURSELF ONLINE!

Whether you want to enter a chat room under cover, unveil a new look – like Kylie – or change your body from top to toe, we show you how

THERE'S AN OLD QUEEN SONG IN WHICH Freddie Mercury warbles something along the lines of 'You can be anything you want to be/Just turn yourself into anything you think that you could ever be'. He may have been as camp as a row of tents, but old Fred was clearly an Internet visionary. He could foresee the day when the Net would allow even the dreariest little pleb to transform him/herself into a smooth-talking love-god, change sex altogether or slay a dragon.

One of the weird and wonderful things about the Net is that it allows you to communicate with people all over the world while still maintaining – if you choose – complete anonymity. This anonymity has a strange effect on some people. Inhibitions are lowered, and placid little souls who look like they'd never harm a fly suddenly go bonkers in newsgroups and chat-rooms, venting years of pent-up spleen on anyone who dares stand in their way. Or they may take the opportunity to get down and dirty and reveal some of their little fantasies that they'd never dream of



Two sides of Kylie online. Far left: www.kylie.com; above: the Manga-influenced www.kylie.com/kylie ultra.html which she practically designed herself

MAKE A NEW YOU

Send a virtual version of yourself out into cyberspace

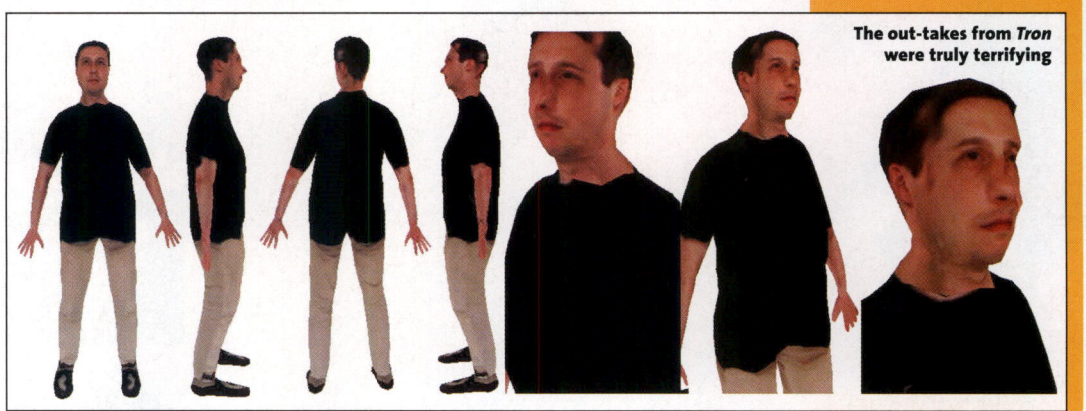
Nestled amidst the cultural sludge that fills the Millennium Dome is one bright, shining nugget: the AvatarMe demonstration in the BT Talk Zone. Step into a brightly-lit booth and they'll briskly take four full-body photographs. While you pass the time watching yourself pedalling with ET over the Dome, the images are pasted onto a pre-designed body map to create your very own avatar – a high-resolution, 3D, downloadable version of yourself, able to enter chat sites, wander through cyberspace and start blasting away in multiplayer games like *Quake*. Just think how much more gratifying it'll be to *really* frag Kevin from Sales.

AvatarMe have got big plans – they intend to have scanned in one in five of our American cousins by 2006. 'The first mobile booths will be in test sites in the UK from October,' says developer Adrian Woolard.

'We'll roll out hundreds in 2001.' And if you're not happy with your haircut on the day you got scanned in, you'll soon be able to use an online avatar editor to make yourself even more stunning.

But why stop there? On the Web, you can be anyone you want to be. British PC users can register for free at the sci-fi world to be found in Virtual Zones, then assemble an avatar of their own from a range of heads, bodies and clothes and wander through computer-generated worlds, performing good deeds and racking up credit. This can be used to add to and adapt your online body, rent an apartment – you can even get married to other VZone inhabitants.

Of course you'll have to



The out-takes from *Tron* were truly terrifying

WHAT DOES 'AVATAR' MEAN ANYWAY?

AVATAR IS A HINDU WORD referring to the form that a god such as Vishnu would take when he came down to earth. The word also came to mean someone's online incarnation after it was introduced by Neal Stephenson in his classic 1992 cyberpunk novel, *Snow Crash*. He'd heard the term while hanging out with Unix geeks: in computing it describes a 'superuser' – someone in control of a Unix system. Find out more at dictionary site *www.onelook.com*

discussing with anyone in 'real life'.

But then the cyberspace of the Internet isn't quite like 'real life' as we know it. It's a virtual reality made up of bits and bytes of data that are infinitely malleable. And that means the identity you adopt on the Net is also malleable and subject to transformation. All it takes is a little imagination.

There's a dark side to this, of course. Flame wars and abusive emails can be disturbing to people on the receiving end, especially if they're young children. Misleading personal ads are common, and there will always be criminals who exploit the anonymity of the Net to swindle or deceive. But for most people this aspect of the Net is simply liberating.

At the simplest level you may find that people who are shy in real life can be articulate and confident in emails or newsgroups, and can make online friends who go on to become mates out in the real world. But you can go further than this if you want. As technology becomes more sophisticated you have the opportunity to create an entirely new persona for yourself.

Even before the Web was invented it was possible to enter games known as MUDs – multi-user dungeons. These were text-based fantasy games straight out of *The Lord of The Rings*, in which you generally played the part of a mighty warrior or wizard who stomps about slaying Orcs, dragons and suchlike. These games are still around, and now include variations such as MUCKs and MUSHes.

'Lusty Laura' is, in reality, a 50-year-old bank manager with 17 kids

MUCKs are similar to MUDs, but tend to be more sociable and less geared towards killing things. A MUSH is a 'multi-user shared hallucination' and, yes, they're often as trippy and drugged out as the name implies. However there's a whole genre of MUSHes devoted to role-playing games based on *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and comic-book titles such as *The X-Men*.

These fantasy worlds require a fairly vivid – if not utterly deranged – imagination, but the more down-to-earth Net user can still find other places where they can indulge their more modest fantasies.

Simple, text-based chat rooms are the easiest way to get started. When you join a chat room you normally select a nickname in order to preserve your anonymity, and this is where the process of re-inventing yourself begins. Instead of john.smith@boring.com you can call yourself something like CoolDude, SexKitten or HungLikeADonkey – anything that conveys the type of personality you want to project. And if you want to take things further you can create an entirely new personality to go along with your new name. Believe me, there are plenty of characters out there with nicknames like Silky Sue or Lusty Laura who, in reality, turn out to be 50-year-old bank managers with a wife and 17 kids.

It's also common for female Net users to create male personalities for themselves. Some do it just to avoid being hassled by horny blokes online, while others want to see what it's like to be a man in what is still a male-dominated world. But who cares about the reasons for all this role-playing and reinvention? Let these people enjoy their little fantasies – as long as no one else gets harmed in the process.

You can take things a step further by joining what is known as a 'cartoon chat' or 'visual chat' room. Instead of simply selecting a nickname and typing in text messages, visual chat rooms allow you to select the image of a character to represent you on-screen. These characters are known as 'avatars' (see above), and typically they're made up of fairly cartoon-like characters – busty women, hunky jocks with baseball caps turned back-to-front, punks with multi-coloured mohicans, that kind of thing.

One of the most well-known visual chat

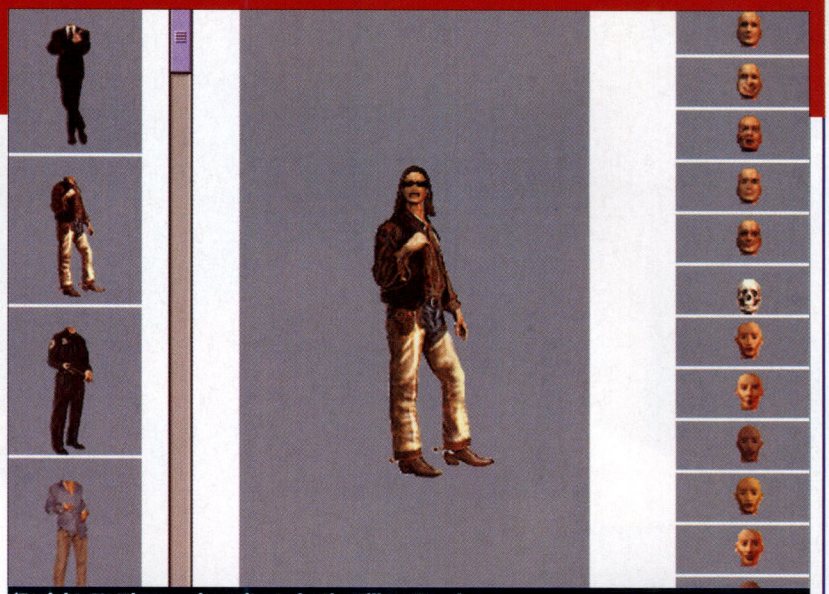
WORDS: FEATURE: CLIFF JOSEPH. AVATAR: MATTHEW BINGHAM, MAKEOVERS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

persuade them first, using only the medium of chat. At Cycosmos, however, you can construct an avatar from the site's body wardrobe, pulling heads and haircuts off the shelf as if you were in the Gap, answer questions about your personality and likes and dislikes, then wait for a fellow Cycosmosian to check you out. And you don't have to have told the truth...

'Cycosmos offers the public the opportunity to create a completely new identity with absolute anonymity,' explains marketing director Sotiris Damianos. 'We give people freedom of choice. You can be female in the flesh, but male in the digital world. Our minds are only just catching up with the possibilities.'

That's not the only potential the technology represents. AvatarMe's Woolard stresses that his company will save the image of anyone they scan in – forever. So don't deprive your future great-grandchildren the chance of a look at your ugly mug in glorious 3D: get scanned, man!

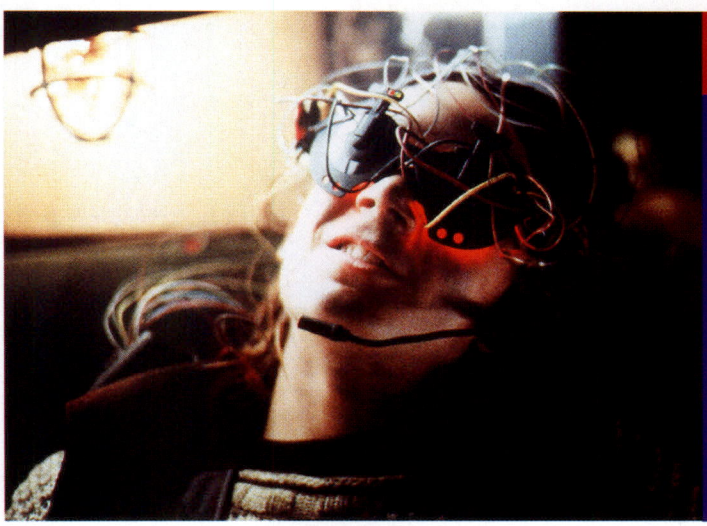
www.avatarme.com
www.vzscifi.co.uk
www.cycosmos.com



'Tonight, Matthew, we're going to be the Village People...

...possibly Calista Flockhart...

...or Mr Bun the Baker'



CHAT SITE CHECKLIST

In real life you're a 35-year-old chartered accountant, still living at home with Mum. But online you can be a total stud or superbabe in one of these visual chat rooms...

- **CAFÉ NIRVANA** *www.café-nirvana.com*
- **DOBEDO** *www.dobedo.co.uk*
- **SAY WHAT?** *www.mtv.com*
- **SURFMONKEY** (for kids only) *www.surfmonkey.com*
- **THE PALACE** *www.thepalace.com*
- **VIRTUAL PLACES** *www.vplaces.net*

Visual chat at Surf Monkey...

...and mtv.com

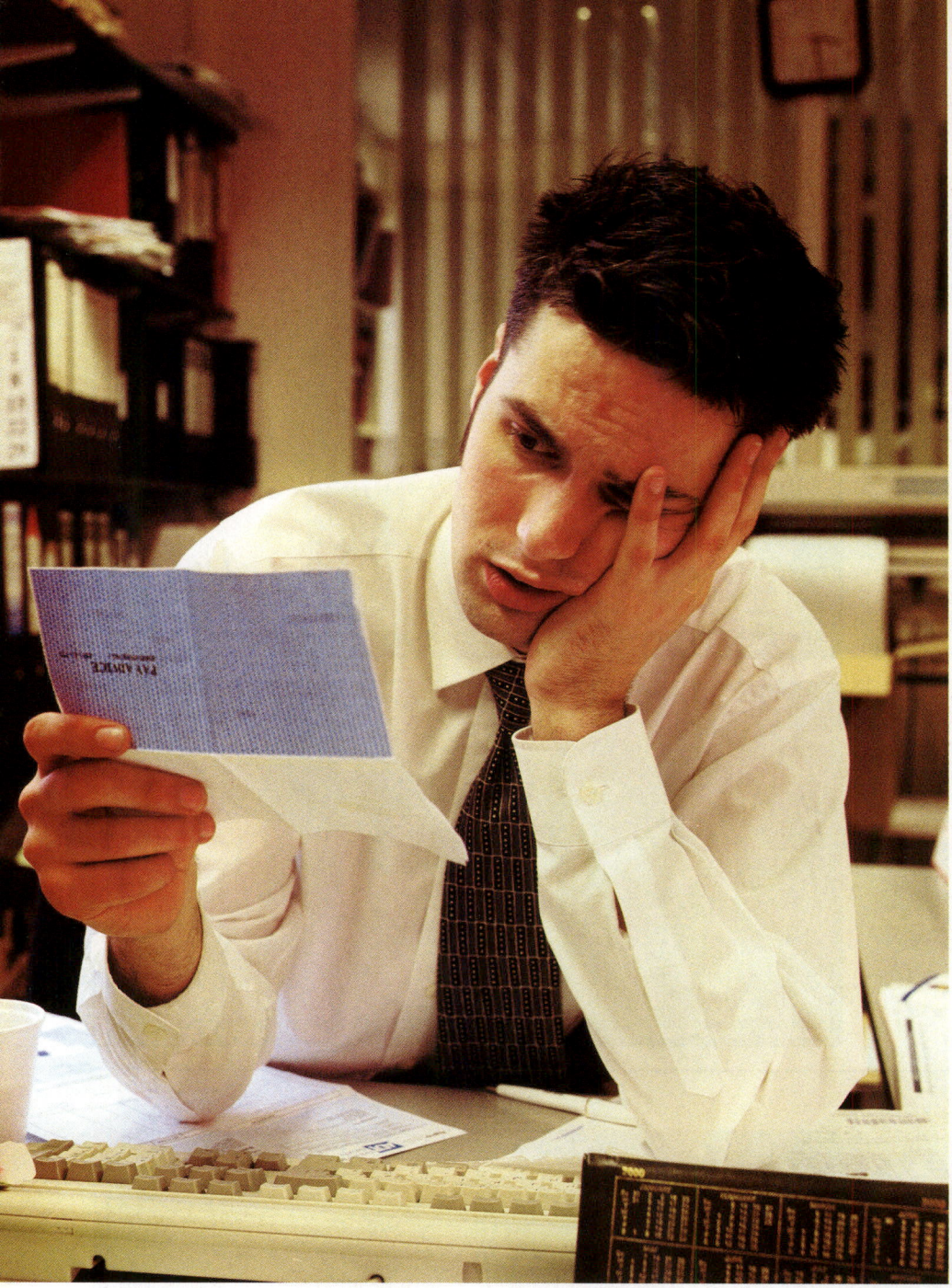
sites on the Net right now is Dobedo. When you join Dobedo you can select your avatar and then take a look at the map of 'Dobedo Island'. The map shows you all the main towns and other areas of the island, and each location may contain a number of venues that have their own ambience and mood. So if you fancy a relaxed little chat you can enter a coffee-shop, which will be displayed on screen with suitable graphics to set the scene for you.

Most of the communication that takes place will consist of text messages that you type onto the screen. These appear in speech bubbles, just like those in a conventional cartoon strip. However, clicking on your avatar with the mouse will also allow you to select a range of emotions, such as 'surprised', 'angry' or 'confused'.

You can select an avatar that looks like the kind of character you want to play, and some of these visual chat rooms will also allow you to create more than one character to suit different moods. So if you're feeling laid-back and sociable on a Sunday afternoon you might select a simple avatar with a nice smiley face and just go around chatting to anyone you meet. While if you stagger home from the pub on a Friday night feeling like a randy tomcat you can opt for an avatar with a bulging codpiece and head off to an area of the chat room where you can meet 'like-minded people'.

Mind you, that's probably not the sort of thing you want to do on Dobedo, since this is a fairly above-board kind of chat room. However, there are lots of other visual chat rooms all over the Net that will allow you to create any kind of character you want, and to meet up with other characters who have all sorts of bizarre interests.

One of the most interesting is Virtual



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freeloader.com

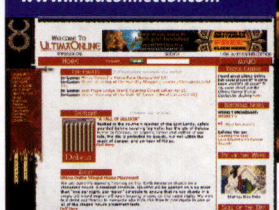
WEIRD WORLDS

If you want to step into a totally new fantasy world, try one of these 'persistent world' games, or one of the many MUDs, MUCKs and MUSHes on the Net.

- **ASHERON'S CALL**
  *www.zone.com**
- **ALLEGIANCE**
  *www.zone.com**

- **DARK CASTLE MUD**
  www.dcastle.enteract.com
- **EVERQUEST**
  *www.station.sony.com/everquest**
- **MUD/MUSH INFO**
  dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Games/Computer_Games/Internet_Games

- **MUD WEB RING**
  www.mudconnector.com



- **ULTIMA**
  *www.uo.com**
- **STAR WARS MUSH INDEX**
  www.cybercom.net/~jbasil/starwars/index.html

**Require monthly subs*

Places, or 'VP' to its regular users. Virtual Places isn't restricted to a single Web site, as it allows you to download the Virtual Places software and connect to other VP sites all over the Web. As all these sites use the same software you can move your avatars from site to site without having to create a new character each time. In fact, a small industry has grown up around Virtual Places, with dozens of sites that allow you to download avatar graphics and animations (some of which leave very little to the imagination). And, instead of simple cartoon graphics, some of these sites have created avatars based on photos of real people – Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts and so on – so you can play the part of a Hollywood sex-kitten or stud-muffin for a few hours if you feel like it.

Another popular visual chat room is The Palace. Like Virtual Places, The Palace allows you to download a standard chat program that can be used on lots of different sites across the Internet. You can even download the Palace Server software that lets you create your own 'palace space' on your own personal Web pages.

The Palace is aimed at a young, trendy audience, and its main Web site carries a series of chat channels that are devoted to films and music. There are teens and romance channels as well, plus channels dedicated to bands such as Garbage and Dogstar. Most of these are fairly straightforward chat rooms that don't involve much in the way of role-playing, but the ability to use the Palace Server to set up your own chat rooms has spawned a host of mini-palaces around the Web. There's a directory on the main Palace Web site, and it lists sites such as Palace In Wonderland, which has a weird, Lewis Carroll-esque theme to it, and the bondage-oriented Forbidden Falls, which hosts submissive training sessions every Wednesday night if you're interested.

The fun thing about these sorts of chat rooms is that you don't actually have to be into bondage or anything similar in order to go there. All you have to do is to create an online character or persona who will dip their toe in the water on your behalf.

MTV has an interesting variation on the standard visual chat. Its Say What? Karaoke chat lets your onscreen avatar sing along to popular songs – it sounds bizarre, but it's worth a try if you're not totally allergic to the idea of karaoke. Then there are specialised chat sites such as Surf Monkey, which is aimed at young kids and supervised by adults at all times.

Finally, at the top of the technology tree for visual chat is Worlds.com, which is effectively a 3D version of The Palace. Instead of two-dimensional cartoon graphics, the Worlds Chat system allows you to enter a three-dimensional visual chat world, with far more realistic graphics. The main Worlds chat system includes chat rooms devoted to films, music and other types of entertainment. The company that developed the Worlds system has also produced customised versions of the software for Bowie.net and HansonWorld, so that Bowie and Hanson fans can get together in cyberspace and do, well, whatever it is that Bowie and Hanson fans do.

You can play the part of a Holly-wood sex-kitten or stud-muffin

The move into 3D graphics kind of brings us full-circle, as the most sophisticated examples of 3D virtual reality on the Internet are fantasy games that are the direct successors to those early text-based MUDs. There are lots of 3D games such as *Quake* and *Unreal* that let you play against other people on the Internet, but these are basically shoot-em-up games that don't involve any kind of role-playing or character creation. However, there is a new type of 'persistent world' or 'massively multiplayer' game that takes online games onto a whole new level. These include games such as *EverQuest*, *Ultima*, or Microsoft's new *Asheron's Call*.

These games create vast fantasy worlds,

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MAKEOVERS BY MODEM

Wish you looked like Julia Roberts? Your wish is the Net's command

Pink is very flattering, you know

World games are the closest yet to creating genuine virtual realities

depicted in glorious 3D graphics, that only exist online and which play host to tens of thousands of players all at once. You create a character for yourself – and once more we're mainly back in wizards and warriors mode, although there are some interesting sci-fi based games coming along as well – and log on for a couple of hours whenever you feel like it. But because the game contains thousands of other players who may be logged on at all times of day and night, the game world continues to exist online even after you've logged off.

These persistent world games are perhaps the closest we've yet come to creating genuine virtual realities. They are worlds that consist of nothing more than computer data, and which exist only in the cyberspace of your network connection. And yet you can create a new identity for yourself in these worlds and spend endless hours living an alternative life where you make friends and even hold down a career in between the odd bout of dragon-slaying.

It's easy to dismiss these environments as a pastime for sad geeks, but the current crop of online games are just the beginning of this new technology. Suppose that instead of slaying dragons you could log onto a football game that let you play the part of David Beckham in a virtual reality re-run of Euro 2000? And then after winning Euro 2000 single-handedly you could go home and have a late-night snack with Pamela Anderson? (This is virtual reality, remember – you can be cyber-married to anyone you want.)

Don't tell me you'd pass that one up. So who's the sad git now, eh?

From 'student'...

...to 'sleek' in just a click, at Changeslive.com

Of course, the beauty of the Internet is that nobody can be sure what you look like. So you really can claim that you've got Brad Pitt good-looks to go with that razor-sharp Ian Hislop wit you displayed in the chat room the other night. But you can't hide in cyberspace forever (unless you're extremely sad) and what if, in reality, you're more likely to be mistaken for Rab C Nesbit on a bad hair day? As ever, the Net can help – although at the moment many of the miracle makeover sites are aimed at women. However, the technology can be easily adapted for the growing obsession with male grooming...

CHANGES LIVE

www.changeslive.com

This offers one of the best online makeovers we found. The beauty/magazine site was launched in the UK earlier this year. It's currently featuring Melanie Sykes, who this month is advising men on the hottest haircuts. 'Hair styles are a notorious accident black spot,' says Mel. 'You may think your short, back and sides looks great but you're possibly the only one that does.' You can then click through five famous haircuts, with faces initially airbrushed out, and hear Mel's verdict (word of advice, boys, she likes it short and blokey). But the real fun is in the Changes Live studio, where you can turn yourself from a ginge to Beckham blond in just a click once you've uploaded a digital picture of yourself.

Compucloz.com: very serious

THE DIGITAL LOOKING GLASS

www.compucloz.com

At the Digital Looking Glass they take digital makeovers very seriously. The company's mission statement is to become 'the dressing room for the digirati' and it claims to be the only one in the world marketing head-to-toe image makeovers based on its patented Digital Dressing Room software. It's primarily targeted at retailers who want their customers to experiment in a virtual environment but it's also aimed at consumers. You can try a live demo on the site that allows you to change clothes, hair and accessories, or take advantage of its 'Email Me a Makeover' facility.

COSMOPOLITAN VIRTUAL MAKEOVER

www.virtualmakeover.com

You'd have to be serious about your makeover to buy a CD-ROM product to help execute it (but you probably wouldn't be a *Cosmo* reader if you weren't). It'll cost a few bob but once you've got it you can go to the site to help yourself to free downloads, including '10 African American hairstyles' (which take only eight minutes to download on a 28.8 modem) or '8 Stylish Locks', weightier at 15 minutes to download. You can also Win a New You, but it was 'Coming Soon' when we dropped by. Typical.

Emakeover.com: dodgy barnets a speciality

EMAKEOVER

www.emakeover.com

A similar service to Changes Live's although not as slick, and we spied a couple of dodgy barnets. However, it lets you do most things – you can even reshape your lips to see if those collagen implants are worth the hassle. Visit ebeautiful friends, a community of fashion and beauty people around the world, such as Fu Li Hung in Hong Kong who advocates: 'Make yourself beautiful'.

OH WHAT A NIGHT!

IS ANY SKILL MORE VALUED THAN THE ABILITY TO PLAN A GREAT NIGHT OUT? NOW, THANKS TO THE INTERWEB, THE SECRET IS WITHIN YOUR GRASP...

THE STAG/HEN NIGHT

YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET SPLICED, AND EVERYONE'S saying it's the biggest day of your life. Which means that the rite of passage we have come to know as the stag or hen evening is the biggest *night* of your life. Make the most of it by mining the font of fun that is the Internet and you can bid bye-bye to bachelorhood or say sayonara to spinsterdom in style!

The first thing you need is a huge quantity of alcohol. In this respect it's not too dissimilar to any other pub crawl, so check out our dipsomania guide on page 59. Of course, with the stag/hen excuse you can take it a stage further by arranging an entire weekend's alcoholiday; favourites include drinking in Dublin (***www.visitdublin.com***), boozing in Blackpool (***www.blackpooltourism.com***) or 'alternative' activities in Amsterdam (***www.visitamsterdam.nl***). If you're not ironic enough to visit the Dome (***www.dome2000.co.uk***) or you don't like views enough for the London Eye (***www.british-airways.com/londoneye***), try Stag Weekends (***www.stagweekends.demon.co.uk***) for more getaway ideas.

In fact, there are several online help resources for interested parties. The ominously-named Last Night Of Freedom (***www.lastnightoffreedom.co.uk***) includes a geographical guide to good UK stag locations, while there's also the American ***bachelorpartytips.com*** and

STAG WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURE: STEVE ORINO; THANKS TO PROPPED UP

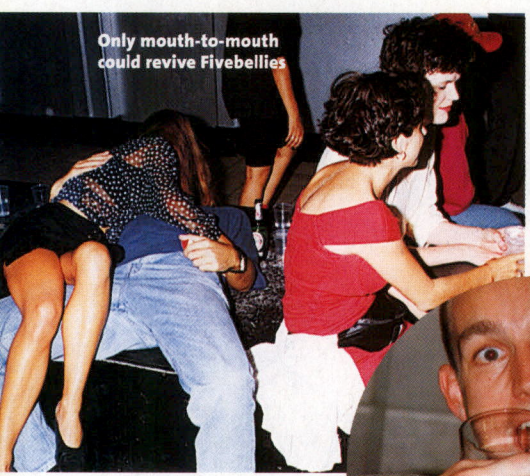
I'M GETTING
MARRIED IN THE
MORNING!
Vin Rouge

'Don't fancy yours much, Patricia'

Trainline will tell you which non-stop express you can dump the comatose groom on

thebestman.com (traditionally it's the ring-holder's twofold responsibility to organise the night *and* rescue the groom). Hen Nights UK (***www.hens.org***) organises various events, and not just for the bride's mob – the boys have a section too. In addition, wedding sites like ***confetti.co.uk***, ***wedding-day.co.uk*** and ***marryingman.com*** have sections devoted to the special night before the special day.

Whatever you decide to do, the odds are that you'll need to get stocked up with the usual ball and chain, L-plates and such. Party Domain (***www.partydomain.co.uk***) and Hens And Stags (***www.hensandstags.co.uk***) will be more than happy to load you up with all these and more. However, if you want to make those at the centre of attention cringe with embarrassment, try Bluesnake (***www.bluesnake.com***) for inflatable sheep and the like. And if you're determined to go down that harsh route, you'll be needing The Trainline (***www.thetrainline.com***) to plan which non-stop express you're going to dump the comatose victim on...


Only mouth-to-mouth could revive Fivebellies

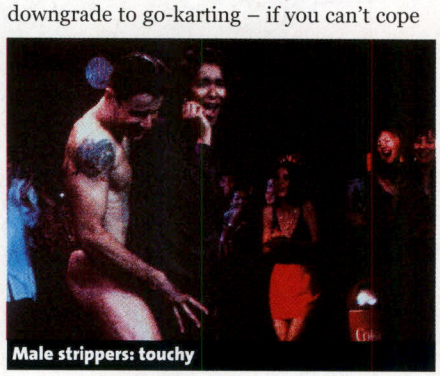
After forgetting his pipes, Pan had to improvise

Then again, you could use the same site to get to the seaside. Go to any coastal resort on a Saturday night in summer and you'll see herds of stags and clutches of hens parading in uniform. The fancy-dress pub-crawl might see you togged up in togas or retro 70s clothing – try ***www.fancydress.com***. If you're hiring, get friendly with a dry cleaner first.

If you fancy something a bit more adventurous than a pub crawl, you can cut out the middleman (or woman) with the Net. More and more, stag and hen parties seem to be designed to stop the happy couple getting to the altar in one piece.

Firstly, there's bungee jumping. Groom a bit cocky? See how big he feels when he's tied to a rope on a bridge over a gorge, preparing for what advocates call 'suicide practice'. For your nearest rubber-band fun, see ***www.bungeezone.com/clubs*** or ***www.BungeeInc.co.uk***. You can also indulge the need for speed in several ways. For instance, you could go car racing (***www.car-racing.co.uk/uktracks.htm***): there's nothing boys like more than hurtling toward oblivion in a car far too powerful for their driving abilities. Try saying this on the stag night for added entertainment value.

Not everyone can drive, so you could downgrade to go-karting – if you can't cope with a stop pedal and a go pedal you might as well give up. And besides, zooming along at 40mph with your arse an inch and a half off the concrete gives you quite enough of a thrill. ***www.karting.co.uk*** has hundreds of tracks and, importantly, an excellent search engine. Alternatively, try quad-biking at ***www.paintball.demon.co.uk/thequads.htm***; or, for a different automotive buzz, try driving a tank (***www.trainingworld.co.uk/event2.htm***).


Male strippers: touchy

Hire a limo, as long as you can promise not to spill or spew on the seats

If you like hitting small balls into small holes miles away with a stick, take up golf (***www.uk-golf.com/courses***). But if that's not frenetic enough, try paintballing: you can prepare to dye (geddit?) at ***www.paintballgames.co.uk*** or ***www.nationalpaintballgames.co.uk***.

A weekend away might be too much, but you can at least make sure you have a night

CRAWL WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: KOBAL, REX FEATURES

THE PUB CRAWL

It helps to have a plan before dunking your grey matter in happy juice

As Smashie and Nicey once said – you just can't beat a great night out. Not half, mate. While the best nights on the town can sometimes be ones that happen ad hoc, if you're planning a night of pubs and clubs, then it pays to make like a boy scout and be prepared.

First of all you've got to look the part, so pop along to Haburi.com (***www.haburi.com***) to get factory prices on designer clothing. While you're at it make sure you smell nice by getting some aftershave or perfume from ***www.theperfumeshop.com***.

If you're intent on going 'on the pull', don't forget you can undo all that good aromatic work after 10 pints of industrial-strength lager, so some breath freshener from ***www.pharmacy2u.co.uk*** is a good call. And it's better to be safe than sorry so pay a visit to ***www.condoms4u.com***. Get a few taxi numbers from ***www.scoot.co.uk*** for that time when you need to collapse in a cab. Finally there's Visa's great ATM locator at ***www.visa.com/pd/atm/main.html*** if you run out of readies.

Enough of that – it's time to get your glad rags on. The preening process is an integral part of the night so make sure you've got some quality tunes to get you in the mood. Try ***www.dance-dj-direct.com*** for dance music or ***www.blackstar.co.uk*** if you want to prance around your bedroom to chart tunes. And you have to get a hairbrush (***www.safariquip.co.uk***) and a tennis racket (***www.indexshop.com***) – a pretend microphone and air guitar respectively.

So you're looking good, you're feeling good, you're smelling good and hey – you *are* good. Now you just need to get out there and paint the town a peculiar shade of crimson. When you've worked out where you're going you need to let your posse know where it's at. You can check out a map of the relevant area at ***www.streetmap.co.uk*** and email the appropriate URL to your mates. Alternatively you could send them directions via a free text message to their mobile phone from ***www.breathe.com***.

All this is very well, but you'll have to hit the hostelries at some point. There's a plethora of pub-finders, or you could try one of the national guides in the panel above. Wherever you choose you might like to whet your whistle with the 500 drinking games at ***www.barmeister.com***. The keen among you will notice that you can have one emailed to you each Friday.

Thanks to our antiquated licensing laws you'll be ready to move on by 11pm. Again there's loads of great clubbing guides on the Net (see panel), or even a comedy club (***www.comedyonline.co.uk***). After that you'll need food. If it's a curry you're after then try ***www.madaboutcurry.co.uk*** or go the traditional route and have a kebab (***www.h2g2.com/A124534***), remembering that it's obligatory to pour chilli sauce on that new, now ruined, shirt.

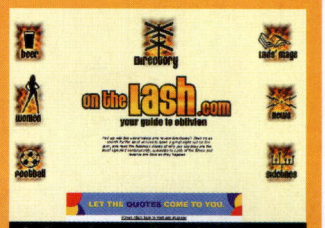
And as recipes for a good night on the tiles go, that's one Mrs Beeton would be proud of. Oh, remember ***www.pharmacy2u.co.uk***, where you bought your breath freshener? They do Nurofen too. Just thought you'd like to know.

PUB GUIDES

- **PARTY CHIMPS** ***www.partychimps.com***
- **ON THE LASH** ***www.onthelash.com***
- **PUBS GUIDE** ***www.pubsguide.co.uk***
- **BIG BEERS** (London only) ***www.bigbeers.com***
- **MY WAP WORLD** (London only, but phone-friendly) ***www.mywapworld.com***

CLUB GUIDES

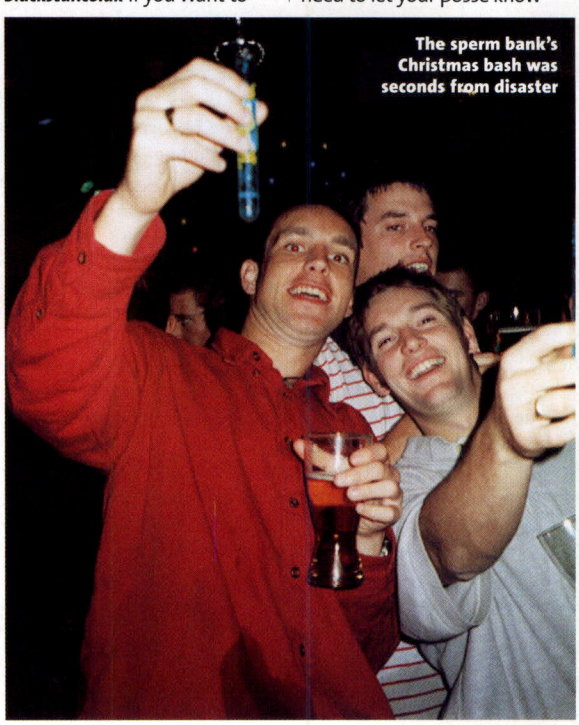
- **CLUBS UK** ***www.clubsuk.com***
- **PARTY PEOPLE** ***www.partypeople.co.uk/nightclubs***
- **CLUB CONNEXION** ***www.clubconnexion.co.uk***
- **UP FRONT** ***www.musiclinks.co.uk/upfront***



Find a pub at onthelash.com...

...a location at mywapworld.com...

...or a club at musiclinks.co.uk



The sperm bank's Christmas bash was seconds from disaster

to remember. Hire a limousine from LA Stretch Limos (***www.lastretchlimos.co.uk***) and, as long as they promise not to spill or spew on the seats, the gang can have a whale of a time in a mile-long motorcar. There's no better symbol of regal decadence than cigars, so pick up your ostentatious smoking materials from The Decent Cigar Emporium (***www.decent-cigar.com***) to envelop your environs in expensive fug. And what better destination for the high-rollers to arrive at than a casino? If you fancy spending money like water in the belief you can shake like a Sheikh, find your nearest casino at ***www.british-casinos.co.uk*** – but don't forget to pre-register or there'll be tears.

Speaking of bed, you can't have a stag or hen night without sex – or at least the thought of it – rearing its head. Blokes with more money than taste can check out Stringfellows (***www.stringfellows.co.uk***), but the stag-night standby (and hen-night staple) is the stripper. While a family magazine like this couldn't possibly give specific URLs, there's nothing to stop the broad-minded reader from entering 'striptease artiste' into their favourite search engine...

'If we dress up in sheets we might pull'

THE HOUSE PARTY

IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A GOOD IDEA AT the time. A few select guests, some light 'entertainment' and a moderate amount of alcohol to ensure things go with a bang. What quickly transpires, however, is the kind of depraved free-for-all that requires police intervention. But with a bit of planning and a smattering of luck, it *is* possible to hold a house party without inadvertently inviting half of Britain. And, of course, that's where the Internet comes in...

The most essential ingredient in your perfect party mix will be, of course, booze. Ensuring a steady supply and variety of alcohol will guarantee happy guests (and if none turn up, it gives you the option of drinking yourself into a stupor). Many of the High Street off-licences now also run Web sites, while Last Orders (***www.lastorders.com***) offers reasonably-priced booze for next-day delivery, as does ***www.drinx.com***. The real ale sensibilities of ***aleontap.co.uk*** should keep the bearded contingent among your guests happy, or if you're hellbent on destruction a visit to ***eabsinthe.com*** will prove fruitful. To go the whole hog, try ***www.drinkstuff.com*** for a range of optics, games and drink-associated paraphernalia. Better still, tell ***www.idrink.com*** what's in your cabinet and they'll tell you what hideous concoctions you can create.

Guests are pretty important, too, so why not send out invites? Magic Images (***www.magicimages.co.uk***) will print cards of your choice, but it's easier to track your replies with the help of an online service like ***www.invitemetoo.com*** or ***www.pleasersvp.com***. You'll want some nibbles, and the Web is teeming with caterers: if Anton Mosimann (***www.mosimann.com***) is slightly out of your price range, ***www.eventservicenet.co.uk*** has an extensive list covering the whole of Britain. If you'd rather take care of things yourself, decide on a menu with the help of the Searchable Online Archive of Recipes (***soar.berkeley.edu/recipes***), which boasts a database of over 65,000 meals. Supermarkets such as Iceland (***www.iceland.co.uk***) will take care of the ingredients.

You'll need music to drown out the sound of copious retching: a trawl through UK DJs (***www.ukdj.freeserve.co.uk***) will seek out your nearest mobile disco or DJ, or you can do it yourself by hiring some equipment from Sapphires (***www.sapphires.co.uk***).

All the above will make a fine party, but you might like to consider some little extras. Like balloons (***www.balloooninabox.co.uk***); an 'entertainer' for the guests (***www.entertainers.net***); security to keep out the riff-raff (***www.intermarque.co.uk/eso***); or a mobile casino to fleece your guests (***www.blackcats.co.uk***). If you're slightly more ambitious, stick a marquee up in the garden with the help of Marquee Express (***www.marquee-express.co.uk***) and install a pretentious (but attention-grabbing) ice sculpture courtesy of Global Ice (***www.global-ice.co.uk***).

'Getting people of the world to have fun together' is one of the major points of holding a party, and it's also the raison d'etre of The Party Games Ideas Resource Page (***www.kfps.clara.co.uk/party/list.html***). Drop by to brush up on the rules to old favourites like Pass The Parcel, or learn new ones. And if that sounds like too much of an effort, let someone else do all the organising – Party Parties (***www.partyparties.co.uk***) will give advice on making it a success, while Main Event (***www.main-event.co.uk***) and Dr Party (***www.drparty.com***) cover everything from invitations to cleaning up afterwards.

Speaking of which, that most onerous of tasks is an unavoidable consequence of your little soirée. Fortunately, the Web can help here too: Chalcot House Cleaners (***www.users.dircon.co.uk/~chalcot***) or Gerrards Cleaning (***www.gerrards-cleaning.co.uk***) may be lifesavers. Your best defence, however, may be to bookmark ***www.howtocleananything.com*** before your guests even start to arrive...

FIGHT FOR YOUR SITES TO PARTY

■ **PARTY411**
www.party411.com
US-centric party guide with plenty of advice on etiquette and tradition.

■ **PARTY EXPRESS**
www.partyexpress.co.uk
Let someone else do the work with this selection of bus-bound parties.

■ **DRINK OF THE WEEK**
www.drinkoftheweek.com
A different drink to make. Every week. A guaranteed winner with guests.

■ **PARTY KIDS**
www.partykids.co.uk
Everything you need to plan a bash for the little ones.

■ **OUT & OUT ENTERTAINMENT**
www.oao.co.uk
A whole directory of party entertainers and services.

■ **ICECRAFT INTERNATIONAL**
www.icecraft.com.au
Import an ice sculpture mould to fill and freeze in your own home. Not for those on a budget.

■ **LOO HIRE**
www.loohire.co.uk
Surprise your guests with an extra outdoor crapper...

■ **JME**
www.party-poppers.com
Makers of a whole range of accessories – including party poppers!

The Kings of Vegas crashed another wedding

WORDS: ROB JEFFERY; PICTURES: KOBAL, REX FEATURES

Ammirati Puris Lintas

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What sounds even better than a Cobra in a long tunnel? A VDO Dayton Audio System.

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A NIGHT OF CLASS & CULTURE

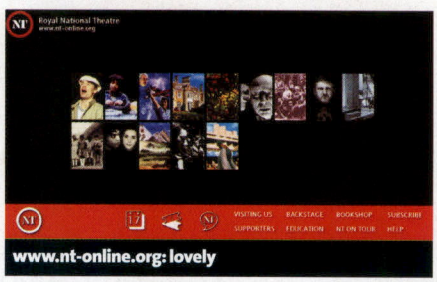
'Let's try the third verse again, Mr Pavarotti'

A NIGHT OF CULTURE: THAT'LL BE A couple of G&Ts, a quick flick round an exhibition (preferably one of those free ones they have in the foyer), followed by the main event – a play, opera or ballet. And then, if there's time, a pleasant après-theatre supper, followed by a cab home.

First off, decide what culture you want to consume. If you know what you want to see, head for a ticket agency, such as ***www.firstcalltickets.com***, ***www.tickets-direct.com*** or ***www.ticketmaster.co.uk***. Be sure to check out discounts and deals: Ticketmaster was offering two-for-the-price-of-one tickets for the Reduced Shakespeare Company's *The Complete Works of Shakespeare – Abridged* when we dropped by. If you're unashamedly London-centric – or just live there – West End Theatre Bookings at ***www.uktickets.co.uk*** or the Ticket Office at ***www.ticketoffice.com*** are both good bets. And an absolute must to find out what's on is the *Evening Standard*'s ***www.thisislondon.co.uk*** site. It'll plan your complete night out, and even tell you where the 'nearest pub or restaurant' is. Theatre Net (***www.theatrenet.com***) and UK TheatreWeb ***(www.uktw.co.uk)*** are two excellent resources for theatre goers and ***www.opera.it*** is a good equivalent for opera lovers.

If you only sign up to one newsletter we recommend ***www.whatsonstage.com***; and you can now book direct from the site, too, courtesy of an alliance with First Call.

No set of cultural bookmarks is complete without the South Bank's sites: ***www.nt-online.org*** for the National Theatre (NT) and ***www.sbc.org.uk*** for the Hayward Gallery and Royal Festival Hall. The NT site even lets you download RealAudio clips as a taster. To find out about those glorious aforementioned free events (such as Commuter Jazz), where you can walk around drink-in-hand, go to ***www.sbc.org.uk/rfh/sub_rfh/free_events.***



www.nt-online.org: lovely

No set of cultural bookmarks is complete without the South Bank sites

For exhibitions beyond the South Bank, you can check out what's going on from the Loading Bay in Brick Lane to the Tate in Cornwall at the *Galleries* magazine site at ***www.artefact.co.uk***.

So you're just a click away from seeing *Orpheus Descending* at the Donmar, and your attention is turning to supper – somewhere stylish to discuss the intricacies of Tennessee Williams' characterisation and plot. We recommend a visit to ***www.toptable.co.uk*** or ***www.bookzeat.com***, where you can book a table direct – as long as the restaurant you want is listed on their site. Top Table claims to have 50,287 covers at over 600 restaurants throughout the UK, with major cities such as Bath, Brighton, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Dublin and Leeds included. There's a great gossip section where you can find out where Liz Hurley ate last week, for instance, and if you've booked your seat to the proms, there's a special Last Bite at the Proms section.

Unfortunately, ***www.bookzeat.com*** is 100 percent London at the moment, but is still excellent. Restaurant reviews are provided by the esteemed Richard and Peter Harden (who you can also find at ***www.hardens.net***), and there's currently a Lucky Table competition which could mean Book2eat picking up the bill (you'll still have to tip, though). Find advice on this at ***www.tipping.org/tipping/tipping.html***).

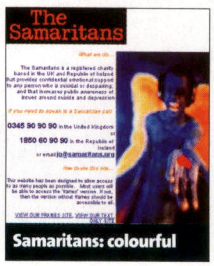
If you do find yourself on a Lucky Table, maybe you can even afford a black cab home. If you become an account holder, ***www.dialacab.co.uk*** will let you book online. It may well be worth it – and you won't have to tarnish your rarefied night of culture with filthy lucre by stopping at the nearest hole in the wall for your fare home.

HOME ALONE?

When all else fails, your PC won't let you down

Kylie blown you out? Never mind, you'll just have to make your own entertainment. That prime comfort food – pizza – is available from Domino's (***www.dominos.co.uk***). If you don't fancy a Mighty Meaty or Pepperoni Passion, check out ***www.take-away-direct.co.uk***, which has a selection of takeaways ranging from Greek to Thai. Or, if you're really stuck for something to do, you could even go as far as cooking your own meal: Tesco at ***www.tesco.co.uk*** can do same-day delivery. There's a £5 charge, but no minimum order amount. And if you know in advance that there's a hole in your diary, Sainsbury's at ***www.sainsburystoyou.co.uk*** will deliver the day after taking your online order.

From vegetables to vegetating, and there are plenty of places online to deliver your eye candy. Movie-trak (***www.movietrak.com***) offers the latest DVDs to rent, or Blockbuster (***www.blockbuster.co.uk***) offers videos to buy online.

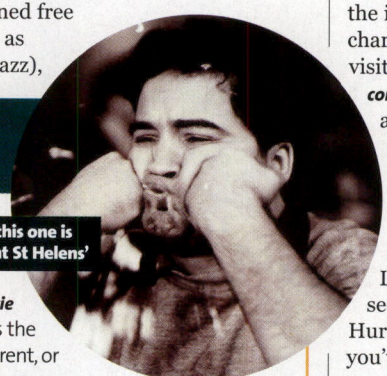


Samaritans: colourful

Can't be arsed to watch an entire film? Then surf the TV channels with the help of DigiGuide at ***www.digiguide.co.uk***. You can customise your own listings and it alerts you when your chosen show is on.

If you crave company, go online and make some new friends. Chat sites won't know how desperate you are, and you can pretend to be anyone you like. If you want to get a little more up close and personal, the contact service at ***www.venusdating.co.uk*** claims to be 'secure and discreate' (but presumably not too hot at spelling), or you could try ***www.interweb.co.uk/personal.htm***.

And if all that fails, you can always got to ***www.samaritans.org.uk***.


'And this one is Mount St Helens'

CULTURE WORDS: SUE WEEKES; ALONE WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE. PICTURES: KOBAL

Ammirati Puris Lintas

For further information or a dealer list, call 08 00/2153 15 or visit www.vdodayton.com

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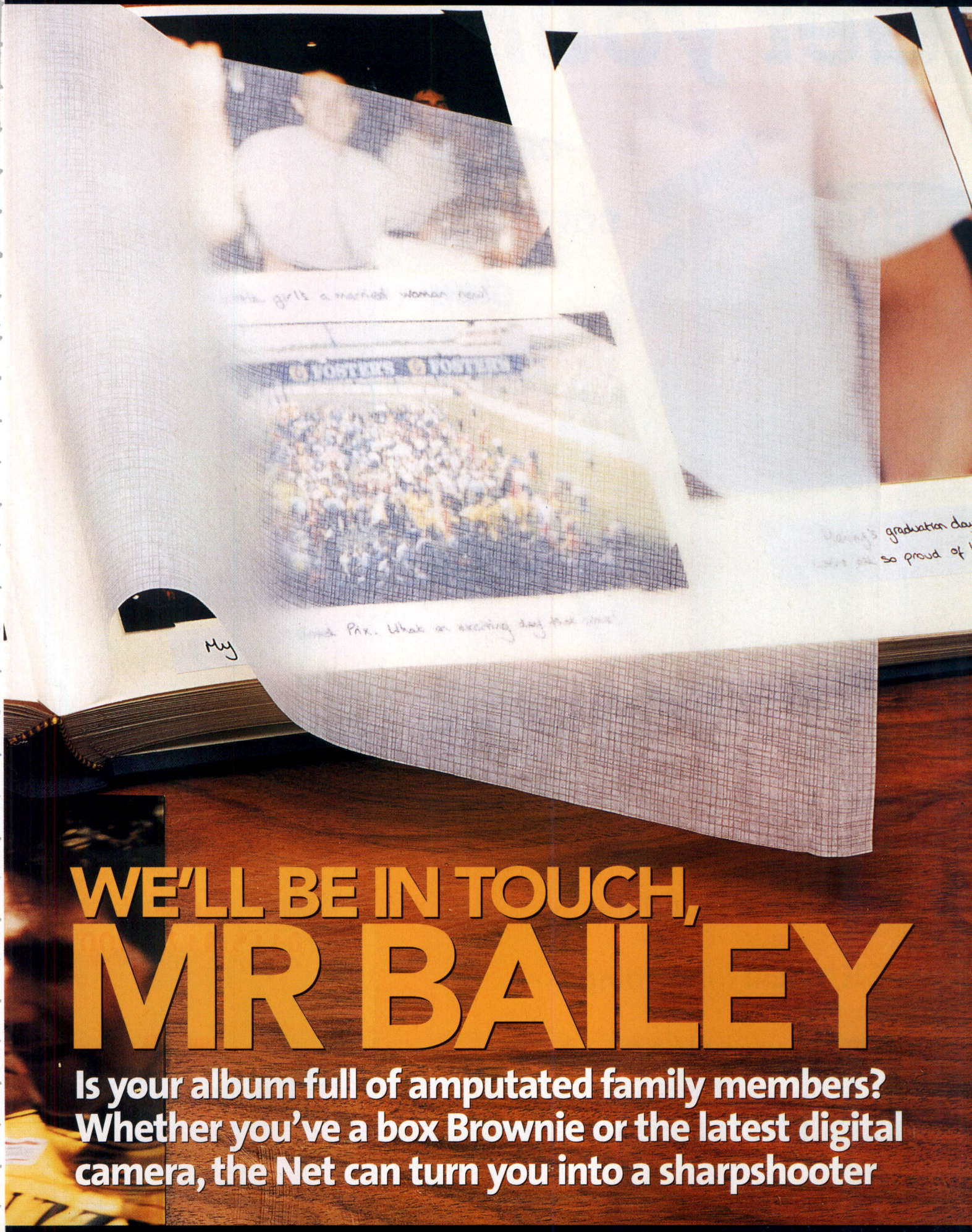
Our QE11 cruise - such a beautiful island!
First day in the office. Doesn't George look smart?
Henley Regatta, 1998.
Henry's team won!



WE'LL BE IN TOUCH, MR BAILEY

Is your album full of amputated family members? Whether you've a box Brownie or the latest digital camera, the Net can turn you into a sharpshooter

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'Lightning is a high-risk... ouch!'

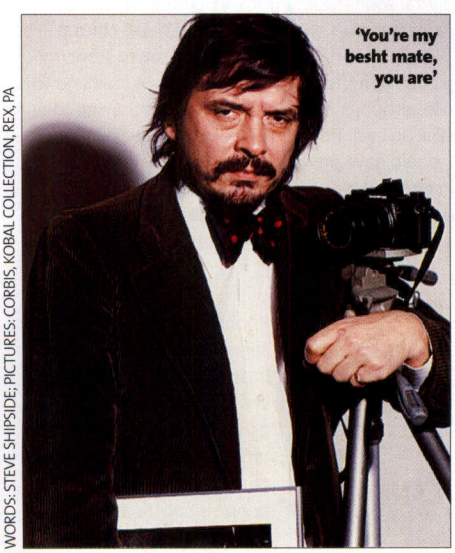
Zeus had had enough of Brighton Marina

It may have been meant to be text only, and the Web's father – Tim Berners Lee – has often expressed his irritation at the 'distraction' caused by images, but you don't have to surf far to see that the Net is dominated by photos. And not all of them are the kind that get you fired from work. The Web is a natural gallery for snappers of all abilities to explore the range of technologies that are now part and parcel of photography. Amateur shutter-bugs looking for ideas on better composition, would-be pros looking to break into travel reporting, or artists examining creative computing can find what they want on the Web.

And should you be thinking of slinging out the silver halide in favour of dipping a toe into digital waters, then the Web also has all the information you need to decide if you're best suited to capturing your images on film, floppy, or flash RAM. Just read on...

TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

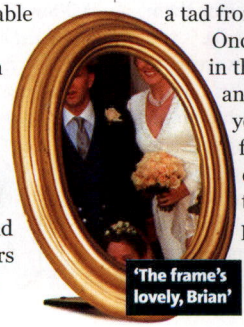
The Web might have a natural bias towards digital cameras, but there are more than enough sites to keep film fanatics happily snapping...



'You're my besht mate, you are'

WORDS: STEVE SHIPSIDE; PICTURES: CORBIS, KOBAL COLLECTION, REX, PA

Do your subjects suffer from red eye? Or perhaps you can't frame a snap to save your life? For the ABC of photography – and that means everything from how to create a pinhole camera to the mysteries of f-stops – there is no better place to start than at the grand dame of the industry, Kodak. At ***www.kodak.com***, there's some inevitable product plugging, but it comes accompanied by useful information and online tutorials. The Kodak site examines 28 likely picture situations and tells you how to make the most of each one. The tutorials include 'the language of light', composition and framing, and even darkroom techniques for lovers of dingy basements and buckets of noxious chemicals.



'The frame's lovely, Brian'

For a slightly more humble (and British) approach, there's a friendly, straightforward site for beginners and jargon-busters alike at ***www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~tkemp***. Our man Tim covers technology and technique, and is candid enough to include examples of his own photos. Definitely a guide for learners, it's clearly laid out – although it does suffer a tad from Lurid Font Syndrome.

Once you've done your homework in the company of Messrs Kodak and Tim, maybe it's time to get your efforts marked. One of the features of the Web is that you can send your creations by email to photographers, who will return personal feedback on them. Try Philip Grosset, who's ready and willing to offer advice on your snaps. Mr Grosset's

SHOCKING SNAPPERS

There's more to photography than wedding pics and portraits. As ever, the Web is the spiritual home of the weird and wacky, such as these fine fellows...

You know you've entered strange territory when a photography site starts with this disclaimer: 'Warning! Photography of lightning is a high-risk activity that can result in injury or death! I have almost been struck by lightning over 40 times. If you read this page, you do so at your own risk. I'm a poor boy, so don't even think about suing me if you get hurt trying to photograph lightning using this page.' If that doesn't put you off, what follows is the best guide to lightning photography we've come across. Take your life in your hands at ***www.scc.net/~kiesling/howto.htm***.

'If you read this page, you do so at your own risk'

At least lightning is proven to exist, unlike the subject of the Photos of Ghosts site. Hoppy the Ghost (with a little help from Roddy Douglas) is happy to help you take fake pictures of apparitions at ***www.members.home.com/roddydouglas/ghost-front-door.html***. Its purpose is 'to show you how easy it is to take photographs that look like they may be of ghosts'. Lurking behind the phantom pics are useful tips on special effects. If you've ever wanted to try your hand at bulb photography (the night-time shutter effect that shows moving cars as long blurs of headlight), then this is a good place to start.

Phantom motors: spooky!

qualifications aren't made clear, but a second opinion's a second opinion – and it's free. If you're shy, sneak a peek at what he says about the work of others. Whatever you decide, it's all up for grabs at ***www.betterphotos.icom43.net/yourphotos.html***.

Once you've gained some confidence, you'll want to find something to shoot. Photographers come in all shapes and sizes, and the Web is big enough to accommodate every variety. If you've ever dreamt of being a travel photographer, it's worth taking a look at Fodor's site (***www.fodors.com/focus***), which offers tips on shooting travel pictures, illustrated with photographs from professionals.

For those who'd rather work with animals, there's a useful site from nature photographer Bob Atkins at ***bobatkins.photo.net***. More wildlife photography (of a slightly damper kind) can be found at underwater photo sites, which discuss techniques and the ever-growing range of subaqua snapping toys. If you're the type that feels that real photography is only ever practised on Nitrox at 45 metres, then take a look at ***www.oceanoptics.co.uk***.

Of course 'nature' means different things to different people, as is clear from the fact that many amateur photo magazines carry a remarkable number of pictures of unclad ladies. It should come as no surprise to find that, yes, the Web has tips on snapping nudes. Try ***photo.net/photo/nudes.html*** for one of the better examples.

For those who lean more towards the Man Ray than the man Bailey, the far edge of creativity is also catered for in cyberspace – as the Creative Photography workshop will prove. In addition to the portfolios of experimental photographers, the site examines new techniques as they are developed, such as stroboscopic photography or cross-processing. They're a mix of photographic and darkroom effects (though not all require you to use your own darkroom), and can be found at ***members.tripod.com/~pworkshop/tnp.htm***.

The strangler snapped all his victims

GOING DIGITAL

If you're the type who likes to get their hands on all the latest photo toys, look no further...

The benefits of digital photography include no development time and no wasting money printing shots you don't want. There's never been a better time to dabble in digital. If anything, the problem is one of sheer choice, since just about every major manufacturer now offers a baffling range of digital cameras for anyone, from the top professionals to the rankest amateur. For the former, there are all sorts of benefits: digital imaging means that shots can be sent for layout or purchase instantly. Certain cameras also feature built-in GPS (on a PC card), which builds precise location data into the final picture – good for wildlife shots apparently.

But for us mere mortals, digital cameras, with their instant displays on LCD panels, means you never need to fork out for blurry pictures – and you'll have instant pics for your Web site or an e-postcard for granny.

The biggest decision is, which camera to choose? Inevitably it's horses for courses, but aside from some factors that you've probably worked out already (like cost), there are a few other things to consider...

The first is resolution – and here comes the science. Digital cameras use little optical sensors called charge-coupled devices (CCDs) to capture images, but these have a maximum ceiling in terms of the number of pixels (individual colour dots) they can use to capture the image. That pixel count, called the resolution range, is expressed as vertical versus horizontal, exactly like the screen resolution on your computer. The thing to remember is that more dots equals better quality (and higher file size). That means that 640x480 is the minimum computer resolution (OK for the Web, but not if you want to print it out); 1280x960 is roughly

There's been no better time to dabble in digital

TESTING THE PRINTMASTER Do these new-fangled online photo albums really cut the

New to the Web are a whole bunch of digital 'developers'. Upload images to their sites and they'll send back high-quality prints by post. Not only that, but they'll store your snaps as online photo albums, which you can either choose to share with the world or selected visitors.

One of the leaders in this field are Photobox (see Bright Sparks, August 2000) and their partners in photography, digital equipment specialists 21store.com (*www.21store.com*). Our three guinea-pigs chose a camera each from 21store.com, then we let them loose in the brave new world of e-photography...

THE GRANNY

ROVING RETIREE GETS CLICKING

Since retiring, Jillian Christie has been practising her photographic skills. She likes taking pictures of her grandchildren and emailing them to friends and family.

'My first test shots were close-ups of flowers, then I progressed to 'live' models – my grandchildren. My Kodak proved good for snapping lots of pictures then discarding the bad ones before printing.

'When I was ready for printing, I got onto Photobox via ***www.21store.com***. It took about 30 minutes to upload the images into my album.

'It was great to see my works of art in one place. I immediately emailed my children to tell them to take a look. I don't know whether they would ever order prints themselves, but I would use the online services again and update my cyberspace photo album.

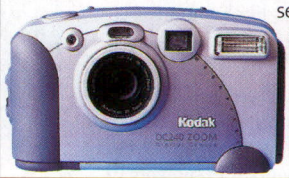
'Now I'm going to photograph my watercolours and post them in the online gallery. You never know, I might even receive a commission!'

KODAK DC240 ZOOM

KODAK DC240 ZOOM DIGITAL CAMERA £429

www.21store.com/details.ihtml?item_id=5270101

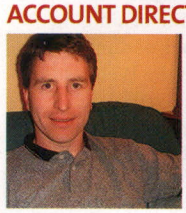
INFO: 1.3 million pixel picture resolution; 3X optical plus 2X digital zoom lens; Mac and PC USB/serial cables



SOFTWARE SUPPLIED: Adobe Photo Deluxe, Adobe Pagemill

THE ENTHUSIAST

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR PLAYS *STAR WARS*



Craig Thatcher is an account director at fraserdesign.com, a graphic design and marketing communications consultancy based in Hertfordshire.

'I chose a Fujifilm MX2700: light, compact and generally pleasing to handle. I like the display monitor that allows me to view and edit my photos and I especially enjoy the 4X digital zoom facility. But, most importantly, the camera makes an endearing R2-D2-like chirrup.

'The Fuji software that allowed me to store my pictures on the computer was easy to load and to use, although I was mildly irritated at having to click on each image to initiate storage on the PC – I would have preferred to transfer all the pictures in one go. However, having to select each one does make you more careful about the images you transfer for storage.

'The camera makes an R2 D2-like chirrup'

'After taking some snaps of the office, I logged on to Photobox. A number of services were available including 'album space', sharing photos with friends as well as the public at large. It was fascinating cruising around other people's photos and finding

Diana's photo album was monotonous

mustard? Our guinea-pigs tested one out, then put three digital cameras through their paces

the ability to buy prints from them!

'For my business, I make visual audits of high street stores for clients. Photobox would allow me to post those photos with secure access, enabling my clients to view them on the Internet.

'I was impressed. It felt very appropriate to buy a digital camera and process the images online.'

FUJIFILM MX-2700

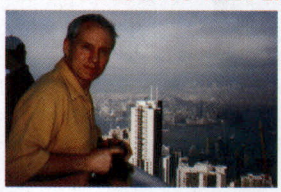
FUJIFILM MX-2700 DIGITAL CAMERA £497

www.21store.com/details.ihtml?item_id=7030102

INFO: 2.3 million pixel resolution; 3X Fujinon zoom lens, 2X digital zoom; USB cable; compatible with Smart Media storage cards

THE PROFESSIONAL

NO STRANGER TO THE PERFECT SHOT



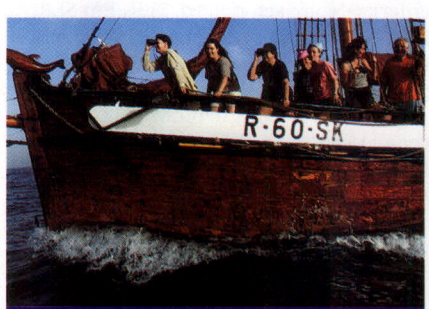
Colin Davey is a professional photographer who works for the *Daily Mail*.

'My Powershot was a delight – solid, well engineered and the stonking 9.9Mb files (3.34 million pixels) it produces result in exceptional quality. It has a very good optical zoom, and its 'photo-stitching' option allows you to photograph a 360-degree scene by taking a series of shots and merging them to create a panorama. Back in 1994 I was using some of first professional digital cameras on the market; a model with interchangeable lenses (and producing 3Mb files) would have set me back about £25,000.

'I uploaded my Spanish fishing shots to Photobox using a PC (the Canon S20 is both PC and Mac compatible) and found setting up the album and emailing images to be trouble-free – although I would have liked to have seen a clearer 'counter', indicating how long there was remaining to wait for images to be uploaded. I received the prints within 24 hours, and they were nicely presented in a clear perspex folio.

'I certainly intend to maintain my album. It's a common problem among photographers that, once away from work, we don't generally want to spend hours browsing through photographic software or printing out our own work!'

*For further details on Photobox, go to **www.21store.com** and follow the links. And for three chances to win one of the great cameras featured here, turn to page 63.*



CANON POWERSHOT S20

CANON POWERSHOT S20 £689

www.21store.com/details.ihtml?item_id=90260913

INFO: 3.34 million pixel resolution; serial and USB cables.

SOFTWARE SUPPLIED: Adobe PhotoDeluxe, Canon Photo-Stitch and Zoom-Browser EX.

equivalent to the resolution of a 4x6 print; 1600x1200 is like an 8x10 print; and by the time you get up to 1920x1600 you're firmly in professional territory.

Next up is the delay between shots. This varies from an instant to many seconds. That might not be an issue for snaps of the family cat, but it will be if you want 'action' shots. Factors such as the type of flash and lenses are the same as you'd find on traditional cameras, although there are some digital-only features on offer, such as optical zoom.

The real issue, however, tends to be the question of how to get the pictures out of your beloved digital camera and into a form where the rest of us can see them. There are various ways a camera can cough up its booty. Some use a standard 3.5in floppy, which certainly makes the media cheap and the download easy, but is limiting in terms of the number of pictures you can store at once. Cables are popular download approaches, be they parallel, SCSI, serial (seriously slow) or USB. The deciding factor will depend on what's at the back of your desktop PC.

Cables can be avoided if you use infrared, but you'll need a computer capable of receiving the signal, and it's not fast compared to its wired rivals. Which leaves removable memory, whether on a PC card (the credit card-sized memory device) or a snazzy (and therefore expensive and rarely compatible) proprietary flash RAM option.

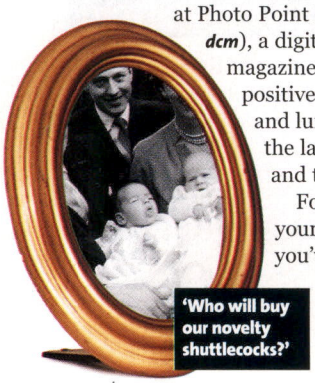
Some cameras will use floppies: cheap but limiting

It's not as scary as it sounds, since many cameras actually boast combinations of the above options. To get a feel for what to buy, check out a site such as Digital Photography Review (***www.dpreview.com***), which has reviews of a huge range of cameras. Best of all, it has a fantastic comparison engine where you can enter your criteria – compact, rugged, SLR, Pro SLR, built-in flash, max resolution, storage, price, viewfinder, zoom, USB support – and it will pull up cameras that match.

If you're not ready to plunge into the comparison engine, then try the more gentle step-by-step decision-making guide at @ctive Buyer (***www1.digitalcameras.activebuyersguide***). Then, once you've decided which camera you want, go back to Digital Photography Review and try the comparison engine to make sure.

Finally, to whet your appetite, take a look at Photo Point (***photopoint.com/dcm***), a digital camera magazine in principle – a positive orgy of pictures and lurid detail about the latest technology and trends in reality.

For what to do with your digital files once you've captured them, see the panel to the right. But, in the meantime, happy snapping!



'Who will buy our novelty shuttlecocks?'

Timothy tried not to let on that he'd split his trousers

DIGITAL DEVELOPERS Scanning and printing via the Web

FOTANGO

www.fotango.com

A contender to Photobox in the online photo album stakes, Fotango will develop your pictures for free, digitise them and hold them on their server. You can upload digital photos, too. Then, when you want prints made, they'll charge 49p for a 4x6 or APS 'Classic', and £1.99 for an 8x10.

PICTUREPLACE

www.pictureplace.co.uk

No free developing here, nor the ability to upload digital pics, and the prices are steeper, too. However, they'll burn a CD of your images at three different resolutions for just £3.99, while digitising your snaps costs around £6. They'll also happily print your artworks onto a T-shirt or mouse mat.

SCARED CAT SCANNING

www.scaredcat.demon.co.uk

No film processing, just high-resolution scanning of your favourite shots. Scared Cat can digitise anything from 35mm slides to original artwork, and email the results to you the next day. The cost? Just 63p a pop.

BOOTS

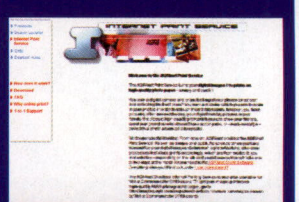
www.bootsphoto.co.uk

The high street giant has wakened from its slumbers and readied an Internet film processing operation, which goes live this summer. Take your films into Boots, then, on collection, pick up a password and share them online. Upload digital pics too. No prices available as we went to press.

SUPAPIC

www.supapic.com

This British company has tied up with US framing specialists eFrames to give your snaps a touch of class. Development, scanning and online storage are all free, prints include a most reasonable £1.80 for an 8x10 (although you'll be billed in US dollars), and there are a fine choice of frames available.



AGFANET

www.agfanet.com/en/ips/fsub_ips.php3

Download the free software, resize your digital snaps on your PC, choose a photo lab, and the program will automatically email your efforts for development. Agfa even has two cameras in the works that will be 'print-ready' – a touch of a button and they start to upload.

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prestophone's ever vigilant price patrol ensures that you'll enjoy ***savings of up to 83% on international calls and 55% on national calls.*** What's more, because it's a ***web-based service*** you'll enjoy the convenience of running your account online. ***prestophone's*** free to join and is ***just a click away.***

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keep your own phone and number | no cheques to write

view charges and top up your account online

www.prestophone.com

*Savings based on BT's peak standard rates before discounts/promotions. Prices effective from 17th March 2000. Rates include VAT. Calls charged per second after first 30 seconds. Rates are charged in pence units. Above rates available to customers opening a prepaid supersaver account, with £30.00 and over and on any subsequent top up of £30.00 and over. The above rate of Internet access only applies to our ISP. All telecommunications services are provided by Viatel Communications (UK) Ltd, division of Viatel. The service is only available to UK residents aged 18 or over.

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www.thomson-lyra.com
THOMSON

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

WERE YOU IMPRESSED BY THE WORK OF OUR VOLUNTEER SNAPPERS? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO WIN THOSE SAME MAGNIFICENT CAMERAS...

Thanks to 21store.com, the leading specialist e-tailer of hand-held digital products, you could win a top-of-the-range digital camera of your very own. First prize is the Canon PowerShot S20, worth £689; second prize is the Fujifilm MX-2700, worth £497; and third prize is the Kodak DC240 Zoom, worth £429. If you want to find out more about these 21st century Box Brownies, take a look at 21store.com's Web site at ***www.21store.com***. Each winner will also receive £50 worth of vouchers to use at 21store.com's extended e-photo service facility.

Create yourself a photo album in cyber-space

One of the world's first e-commerce companies, 21store was formed in London in 1995. 21store.com promises fast delivery of a wide selection of high-quality camera equipment and accessories, in addition to the latest palmtop PCs, PDAs, global positioning systems, digital audio equipment, calculators and sports watches – all available 24 hours a day. Their motto – 'We Know Digital' – is reflected in the guidance they offer about which equipment is most appropriate for their customers' needs.

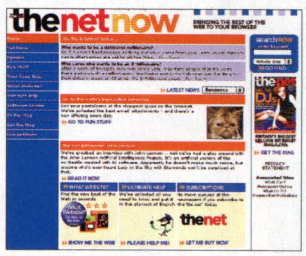
Now, thanks to their extended digital photographic expertise, 21store.com's customers can order digital prints, reprints and enlargements, and can create their own photo albums in cyberspace which can be accessed by friends and family world-wide using a shared password system. Photographic prints are of the highest quality and can be despatched anywhere in the world.

21store.com

www21store.com or call 0845 844 2121

I WANT THOSE CAMERAS! And here's how to get them...

■ **To win one of 21store.com's fabulous digital cameras and £50 worth of e-photo service vouchers, visit our Web site at *www.thenetnow.co.uk*, click on 'competitions' and follow the link to *www.21store.com*. Once you've found the answer, hotfoot it back to the competition page and email us!**



QUESTION:

Who is 21store.com's online advisor to answer your digicam queries?

a) Perry Pixel
b) Peter Pixel
c) Peter Pepper

■ **All entries must be received by September 6, 2000.**

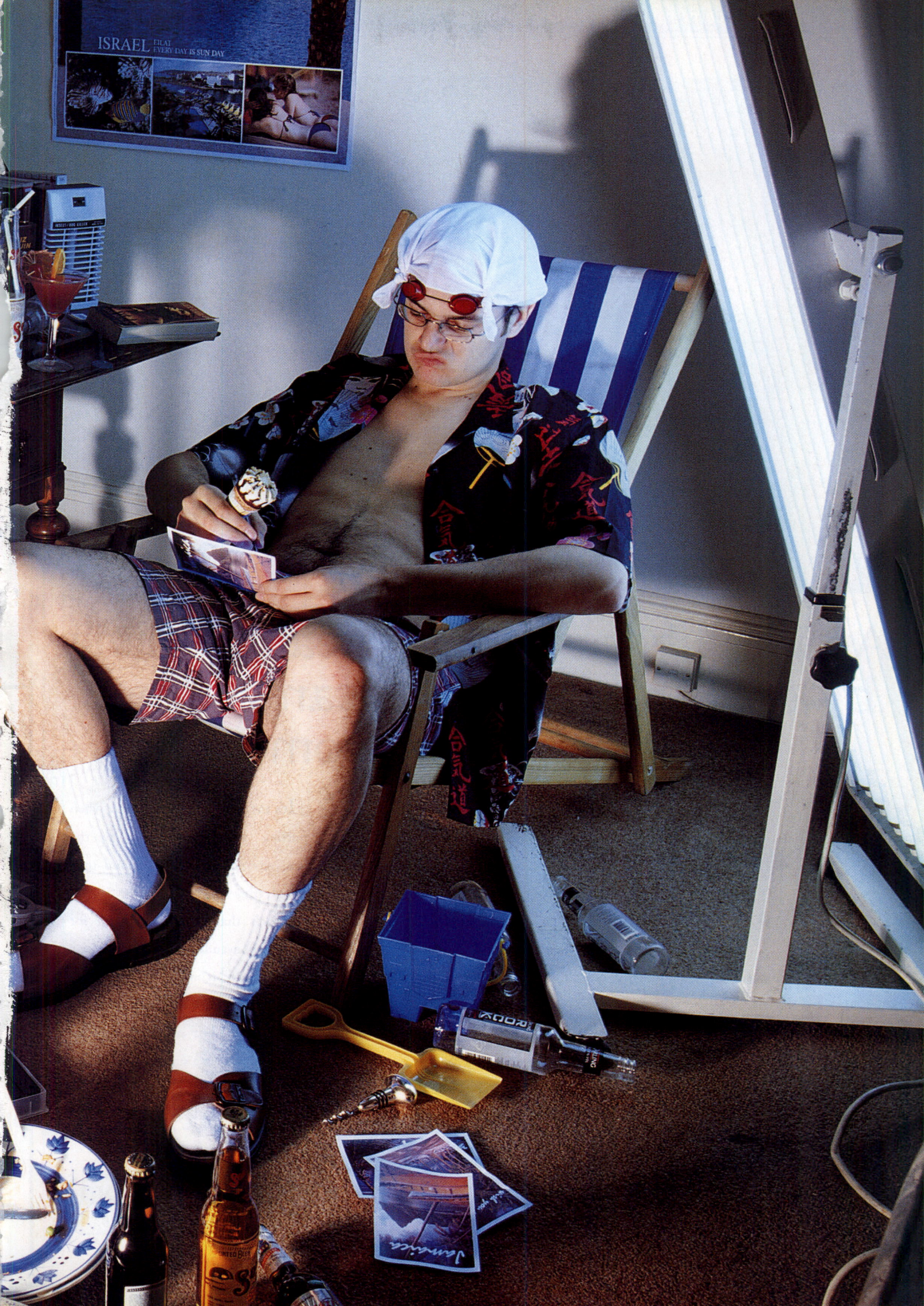
Canon PowerShot S20 (left), Kodak DC240 Zoom (above), Fuji-film MX-2700 (right)

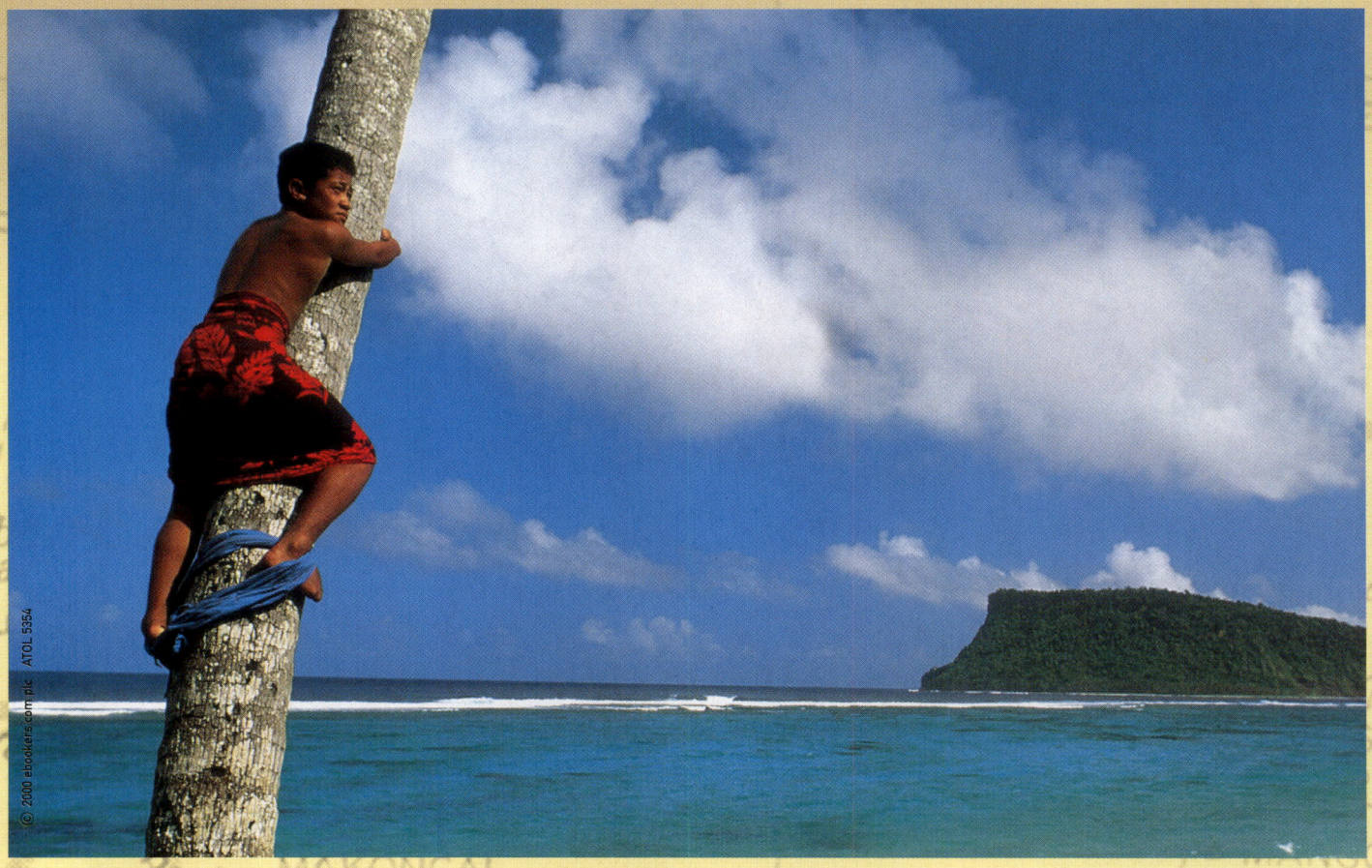
Terms & Conditions

Entrants must be resident in the UK. Employees of 21store.com, photobox.co.uk and *the net* and their relatives are not eligible to enter. No cash alternatives or substitute prizes will be allowed. The competition organisers reserve the right to supply a prize of similar value and specification if the named prize is unavailable. The decision of the organisers is final and no further correspondence will be entered into. Information on the winners will be available within four weeks of the published closing date and will be supplied on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

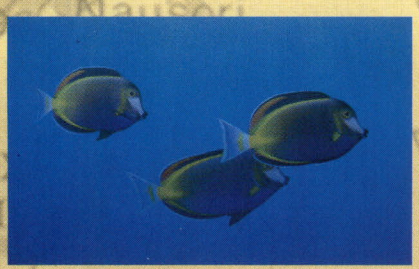
THIS YEAR, DON'T FAKE IT!

Worried it's too late to book your holidays? Not with the Web at your command!


ISRAEL
EILAT
EVERY DAY IS SUN DAY



Arriving here used to mean steering by the stars. Now you can get here with ebookers.com



Marvelous stuff, technology. A thousand years ago a notched stick and a knowledge of the constellations was enough to get you from the coast of the Americas to a tiny smudge in the middle of the Pacific.

Nowadays it's just as simple but far less risky. All you do is check out ebookers.com and immediately the world is just a few mouse clicks away.

The ebookers.com website has won awards for clarity and ease of use. Our home page gives you access to over four hundred airlines, thousands of hotel rooms and over fifty car rental companies worldwide.

All our flights are on scheduled airlines. The seats are the same, the inflight movie is the same. The only difference between a ticket from us and a ticket from someone else is that our ticket will invariably cost you less.

We're able to do this because we sell a lot of tickets, using our massive buying power and passing the discounts on to you.

It's the same approach we use when putting together packages to the sun, adventure holidays, round-the-world trips and city breaks. It's an approach that's already working for tens of thousands of happy travellers.

We know it will work for you. Remember, every journey begins with a single step. But your next journey could begin with a single click.

ebookers.com™
don't be here, be there

There's nothing like a traditional British summer – cold, windy days alternating with torrential downpours – to get a person thinking about booking a last-minute holiday. Now you can make that dream a reality with *the net*'s round up of the best Web sites, offering deals on everything from a trip to the seaside to a ten-week round-the-world cruise...

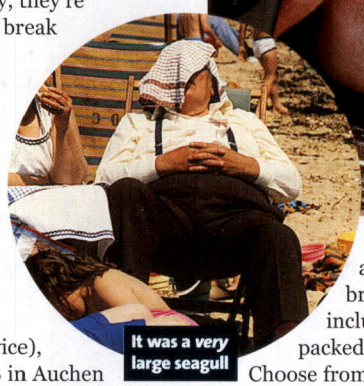
After his chicken, the King started on the OAPs

WEEKEND BREAKS

A weekend at the seaside might not solve Britain's climate problem, but it's still great fun. For hefty discounts (up to 50 percent) at hotels around the country, try ***www.easystay.co.uk***. Currently, they're offering 10 percent off on a break at The Ilfracombe Carlton in north Devon, with B&B starting at £25 per person.

Or what about a stay in a country cottage or manor house? The top offer at ***www.breaks.co.uk*** is B&B at Ashleworth Court, where a night in the four-poster bedroom is £18 per person. At ***www.minibreaks.com*** (who offer a late-deals email service), you can get two nights B&B in Auchen Castle on the Scottish border for £104.

The Berwyn Arms in Wales (***www.maalla.co.uk/theberwyn/activities_weekend.htm***) arrange tailor-made activity breaks for just £109, which includes two nights' B&B, packed lunch and activity sessions. Choose from hill walking, abseiling, canoeing or raft building. Alternatively, Lastminute.com (***www.lastminute.com***) can help you find a historical weekend to suit your tastes. They have offers in cities like Bath and York, or try the Abbey Court Hotel near Chester. Twin or double room with breakfast is only £50 per night.


It was a *very* large seagull

Some weekend breaks are about going away for a specific event. Web Weekends (***www.webweekends.co.uk***) specialise in mini-breaks with activities attached as part of the package. Current last-minute deals include a London theatre break to see *The Graduate*, with one night's stay in a three-star London hotel for £90 per person. Another great site is ***www.holidaydeals.com***, who offer either a two-night, three-star Edinburgh break to see the Military Tattoo in August for £104.50, or else a three-day trip to the Belgian Beer Festival for £99 (including two nights' accommodation).

The Berwyn Arms in Wales will even make you packed lunch

If you prefer wine to beer, Paris is great for a getaway. The two-star Hotel Niel in Paris usually charges 400 francs (£38) per night per room, reduced to 330 francs (£31.50). This deal, and many others, can be found at ***www.laterooms.com***. Alternatively, you could do Paris with more panache and spring for the Castille Sofitel Hotel Demeure near rue du Faubourg St Honoré for 1810 francs (£172) per night deluxe; contact ***www.travelshoppe.com***.

If you like the idea of France but can't face the bustle of Paris, how about a late-availability gastronomic weekend at the Hauts de Montreuil hotel near Le Touquet? Only a short drive from Calais, the break costs from £165, based on a self-drive deal, and is available through ***www.trrravel.com***.

Other city breaks include two nights' B&B at the two-star Hotel Acro in Amsterdam from £169, or a weekend at the Hotel Virgilio in Rome for £192 per person. Both available through E-Bookers (***www.e-bookers.com***).

WORDS: VICTORIA WILLIAMS; OPENING PICTURE: STEVE ORINO

WISH YOU WERE HERE (INSTEAD)

Spare a thought for those holidaymakers who got more than they bargained for

Cola-drinker faces Feds

After objecting to a film being interrupted on his flight from Gatwick to Miami, Mr Phillips exchanged a few words with one of the air hostesses. On arrival, he was arrested and taken for questioning by the FBI, and told he was facing imprisonment and deportation from the US for molesting crew members. The attendants and captain said Phillips had behaved like a drunken lout (despite drinking nothing but Cola throughout the flight). Luckily, the FBI believed Mr Phillips' denial of the story, suggesting he was the victim of a conspiracy.

Skier fails to enjoy break

Vito Seskunas from Baltimore travelled to Wyoming to go skiing. On the first day of a solo five-day trip, he broke his left ankle. Knowing he would not be missed until the following week, Seskunas pushed himself along on his arse for three days (covering five frozen miles), eating only snow and muesli. He was eventually discovered by a hiker and helicoptered out.

'You've got an itch? Oh dear...'

Aussie leaves lid up

An Australian traveller required emergency evacuation from Vietnam after a toilet gave way underneath him, causing severe lacerations and resulting in potentially terminal infection.

Chopped birds spoil take-off

After a disappointing stay in a Jamaican resort, an American family were happy to be heading home. Just as they were taking off, three pelicans flew into the engine of the plane, cancelling the flight. After 10 hours, they demanded to be put on any flight going to the US. While preparing to take off, a man entered the plane and screamed 'I'm gonna blow this motherf***ing plane right up in the air'. He then sat down in front of the family and air-raged all the way to Detroit.

Got your own hard-luck story to tell? *Enter Book-n-Go's (**www.book-n-go.com/eng**) Holidays from Hell competition. There are flights to Hong Kong and Sydney up for grabs. If your tour operator isn't dealing properly with your complaint, try Holiday Travel Watch (**www.holidaytravelwatch.com**), or **www.holidaycomplaint.com**. Other good sites for travel stories to share are About My Travel (**www.aboutmytravel.com**), Trip Source (**www.tripsource.com**) and World Rambler (**www.worldrambler.com**).*

Barbara's mechanical stilts brought her right to the water's edge

For those wanting to splash out (but still get a bargain), Disneyland Paris is offering a 'three nights for the price of two' deal at their Davy Crockett ranch, including train tickets from Waterloo or Ashford. Check ***www. disneylandparis.com*** for details.

Or you could go for a spot of luxurious pampering at the Nantaali Spa Hotel in Finland, where a weekend break costs 524.74 Euros (about £330) per couple (flights not included). Other deals can be found on the spa's Web site at ***www.naantalispa.fi/english***.

If you want to splurge, check out offers on the Orient Express (***www.orient-expresstrains.com***). Currently, you get free Alitalia flights out to Rome, Venice or Florence when you buy the return trip on the train. A Venice-to-London two-day trip costs £1165 per person (murder not included).

SHORT-HAUL HOLIDAYS

The Internet is bursting with great deals to popular holiday sunspots. A good place to start is ***www. bargainholidays.com***. If you can get to an airport in a few hours, there's a huge choice of last-minute holidays and flights, like a charter flight to the Costa Del Sol for £59. How about seven nights in a self-catering flat in Gran Canaria for £199 or Menorca for £169? Also try ***www.holidaydeals.com***, which has a seven-night half-board deal in a three-star hotel in Sfax, Tunisia for £129.

At ***www.cheaperholidays.com*** there's an array of 'Holidays For Under £200'. Most depart within five days, but a few give you a week to warn your boss. How about seven-nights' self-catering in Rhodes for £179?

It's worth checking the big operators for last-minute deals, and you get the advantage of being able to see a picture of where you'll be staying. Thomas Cook (***www.thomascook.co.uk***) is currently featuring the Voula Studios in Kavos on Corfu: two weeks' self-catering in September costs £265, including flights and transfers.

Trrravel (***www.trrravel.com***) has rooms available at the Summerland Apartments, Tenerife; two weeks' self-catering costs a bargain £359. Or, for a quieter break, Cachet Travel is offering two weeks' studio accommodation in the village of Psari Forada on Crete for £285 per person.

A particularly good site for short-haul Mediterranean packages is The First Resort (***www.thefirstresort.com***), where late deals and special offers are brought together from many of the leading UK tour operators. Online details of the holidays are not extensive, but they do

PACKAGE HOLIDAY TOUR OPERATORS

- **AIRTOURS** *www.airtours.co.uk*
- **CLUB MED** *www.clubmed.com*
- **COSMOS** *www.cosmos-holidays.co.uk*
- **CRYSTAL** *www.crystalholidays.co.uk*
- **FIRST CHOICE** *www.firstchoice.co.uk*
- **HOSEASONS** *www.hoseasons.co.uk*
- **JMC** *www.jmc-holidays.co.uk*
- **LUNN POLY** *www.lunn-poly.co.uk*
- **PAGE AND MOY** *www.pagemoy.com*
- **PORTLAND HOLIDAYS** *www.portland-holidays.co.uk*
- **SAGA HOLIDAYS** *www.saga.co.uk*
- **SIMPLY TRAVEL** *www.simply-travel.com*
- **SUNWORLD** *www.cadvision.com/sunworld*
- **THOMAS COOK** *www.thomascook.co.uk*
- **THOMSON** *www.thomson-holidays.com*
- **TRADEWINGS** *www.tradewings.co.uk*
- **VIRGIN HOLIDAYS** *www.virginholidays.co.uk*

JOURNEYS WITH JAPESTERS

Aah, the captains of the skies; how safe we feel in their hands!

If you're a nervous flier, there's nothing like an 'amusing' announcement to put you at your ease. Here's a real-life selection from *pudsmom.tripod.com/pilotsaid*...

'Stop screaming, grab the mask and pull it over your face'

■ **From a Southwest Airlines employee:** 'There may be 50 ways to leave your lover, but there are only four ways out of this airplane...'

■ **As a jumbo comes to a stop at Washington National,** a strangled voice comes over the loudspeaker: 'Whoa, big fella. WHOA!'

■ **'Welcome aboard.** To operate your seat belt, insert the metal tab into the buckle and pull tight. It works just like every other seat belt and, if you don't know how to operate one, you probably shouldn't be out in public unsupervised. In the event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will descend from the ceiling. Stop screaming, grab the mask and pull it over your face. If you have a small child travelling with you, secure your mask before assisting with theirs. If you are travelling with two small children, decide now which one you love more. Your seat cushions can be used for flotation; in the event of an emergency water landing, please take them with our compliments.'

■ **From a pilot during his welcome message:** 'We are pleased to have some of the best flight attendants in the industry... Unfortunately, none of them are on this flight.'

Ducks: skillful fliers

■ **A flight attendant's comment on a less-than-perfect landing:** 'We ask you to please remain seated as Captain Kangaroo bounces us to the terminal.'

■ **After a real crusher of a landing in Phoenix** 'Ladies and gentlemen, please remain in your seats until Captain Crash has brought the aircraft to a screeching halt. Once the tyre smoke has cleared and the warning bells are silenced, you can pick your way through the wreckage to the terminal.'

■ **Part of a flight attendant's arrival announcement:** 'We'd like to thank-you folks very much for flying with us today. The next time you get the insane urge to go blasting through the skies in a pressurised metal tube, we hope that you'll think of us here at US Airways.'

operate a call centre for more information. Bargains include two weeks with Club 18-30 in Ibiza for £339.

Other current deals are a week in The Algarve for £319 (depending on when you fly) through ***www.travelshoppe.com***. And, further up the scale, there's two weeks' full board in a swish three-star hotel in Bodrum for £1024 from ***www.cheapest flights.co.uk***.

If you're after more than a beach holiday, there are plenty of sites that look beyond the Med. A World Of... (***www.worldof.net/travel/holidays/last-minute-holidays***) has a seven-night holiday in Iceland for £279 per person, self-catering. Travelocity (***www. travelocity.com***) has a week in a three-star hotel in Bulgaria for £189, or ***www. lastminute.com*** can offer you a terrific deal on a break in a three-star chalet, half-board, in the Austrian Tyrol for £257. Travelchoice (***www.travelchoice.co.uk***) also has a selection of interesting holidays: a week's full-board package in Naples through Thomson will set you back £465.

LONG-HAUL

For travel further afield, the Internet really comes into its own. These days you can tailor your own holiday without the help of a travel agent, taking advantage of great offers, like accommodation at the three-star A&B Guesthouse in Hua Hin, Thailand: a room for two is reduced to 600 Baht (£10.20) per night through ***www.laterooms.com***.

These days you can tailor a holiday without the help of a travel agent

Julie demonstrates the cheapest way to fly

Want to visit Miami and drive around Florida, but don't like any of the package deals on offer? You can get a scheduled BA flight from The Travel Store (***www. travelstore.com***) for £433.30, including all taxes, then pick up a bargain car rental using One Travel's Car Whiz service (***www.1travel.com/maintour/carwiz***). Book a place to stay through ***www.hoteldiscount.com***, which offers the Geneva Hotel on the beach front in Miami's South Beach at $59.95 (about £39.50) per night for a twin room, or Quik Book (***www.quikbook.com***), which has the far more funky, Art Deco Hotel Marseilles – also in South Beach – for $79 (which works out at about £52) per night.

Alternatively, if you would rather get your whole holiday sorted through one Web site, that's easy as well. An Airtours two-week self-catering holiday in Orlando is available for £649 per person with The First Resort (***www.thefirstresort.com***). While ***www.travelocity.com*** has a two-week package to Las Vegas (don't forget to pack your Elvis costume) for £759, self-catering.

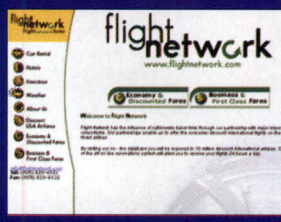
ONLINE BUCKET SHOPS

The Net is the place to find cheap flights to almost anywhere in the world

EUROPEAN TRAVEL NETWORK

www.etn.nl

Comparison hub for over 750 worldwide travel agents. Tell them where you're going, and they will put you in touch with the best agents for that route.



FLIGHT NETWORK

www.flightnetwork.com

US–based, with prices in dollars, but still offering flights from and to destinations all over the world. Huge deals to be had on internal US flights.

FLY NOW

www.travel-bug.co.uk

There's a list of the best current fares for those looking for inspiration, plus a search engine for specific flights and dates. Also has deals on car hire.

DECKCHAIR

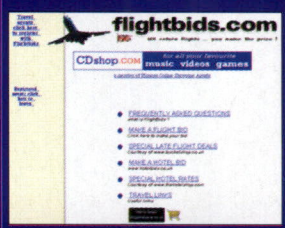
www.deckchair.com

Fast search engine for deals on many airlines, plus highlights of the best deals currently on offer. Not to mention a great holiday-sounding name.

UK COURIER FLIGHT GUIDE AND DIRECTORY

www.nry.co.uk/bnw

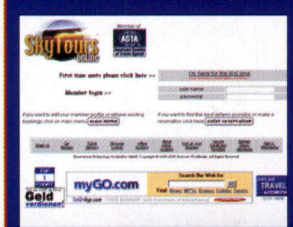
Not exactly a bucket shop, but more like a club you have to join in order to get hold of amazingly cheap courier flights all over the world. Budapest from £50 or New York from £100 return can be yours for the price of the guide (£7.99), which also allows access to news and bargains on the site.



FLIGHT BIDS

www.flightbids.com

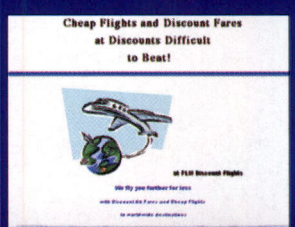
Online auction site for clearance flights around the world. Some amazing bargains to be had. Once on the site, you can even make a bid on accommodation.



SKY TOURS ONLINE

service.skytours.de

Another vast search engine and booking system. You can check for lowest fares on your route, or simply put in your dates and they will check the best itinerary and availability. Easy to use with good results.



FLM DISCOUNT FLIGHTS

www.flmtravel.co.uk

Good choice of charter flights from all major UK airports. There's also information on last-minute short breaks and car rental.

FLIGHT DIRECT

www.flightsdirect.co.nz

Specialising in simple itineraries on popular flight routes to keep fares low. Good for trips around Australasia and the Pacific.

JETSETTERS

www.bargain-flights.net

Loads of cheap flights – especially to popular European sunspots like Tenerife and Ibiza.

4AIRLINES

www.4airlines.com

Clearance site for flights with many top airlines. Also includes useful information on most international airports – how to get there and so on.

AIR 4 LESS

www.air4less.com

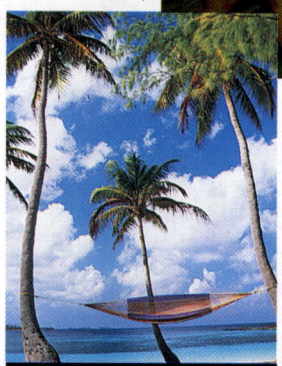
Sometimes difficult to access, but a good site for discounted and consolidated airfares.

William HILL
CASINO
www.williamhillcasino.com
The online casino in your home

The Chin brothers finally cracked Delia's scone recipe

If you're after a holiday with a slower pace, Holiday Deals (***www.holidaydeals.com***) has a 15-night Caribbean cruise. The Black Watch or Black Prince liners (you can take a virtual tour of the boats on site) stop at 11 destinations, and the package costs £1658 per outside cabin.

Kuoni (***www.kuoni.co.uk***) has offers on package deals to exotic locations, the best currently being 10 nights in the Nexus Beach resort in Borneo from £599, including flights. The resort features golf and watersports and is situated on a three-mile stretch of beach with a rainforest behind it.


Pupa enjoyed his summer break

There are more tropical bargains at ***www.cheaperholidays.com***. How about flights plus three luxurious weeks in a four-star hotel in Mombasa, Kenya for £1324, or two weeks' four-star accommodation and flights to Barbados for £699? Cheaper Holidays also has detailed resort guides and tips on the weather. Pack Your Bags (***www.packyourbags.co.uk***) has a good selection of discounted last-minute deals – a week's package in Barbados, self-catering, costs only £469 if you can leave in a few days' time.

Once again, ***www.lastminute.com*** has some terrific offers. Two weeks in Sri Lanka, full board in three- or four-star accommodation, including flights to Colombo, is £839. The imaginatively titled ***www.packageholidays.co.uk*** offers two weeks in a three-star hotel in Montego Bay, including flights, for £1459. Thomas Cook (***www.thomascook.co.uk***) also has a number of last-minute deals to far-flung destinations. Sun fanatics should head for Coco Palm resort in the Maldives for an all inclusive package, with free excursions and watersports, for £1949pp.

For those who want to do a little more than laze around, there are challenging packages out there. E-Bookers (***www.e-bookers.com***) has a 14-day Mexican Adventure, which involves camping from coast to coast, for £384 based on two sharing. You have to book your own flight, but everything else is included, such as tours of pyramids and a cliff-diving exhibition. Also on E-Bookers is an Egyptian Nile Journey which includes meals, accommodation, transport once you're in Egypt and entrance fees to sites. The package costs £375 per person and is simple to book online.

Finally, if two weeks just aren't enough, blow a year's salary on a 72-night World Cruise Starting in Fort Lauderdale and ending in the Med, the Royal Princess stops at Sydney, Hong Kong, Bombay and other destinations. Leisure Planet (***www.leisureplanet.com***) has an unbelievable deal on it – an Ocean View stateroom which should usually be $38,850 (about £25,600) for the trip, is down to $18,700 (about £12,300) – a saving of $20,150 (about £13,300).

WHAT THEY DON'T TELL YOU IN THE BROCHURES

Increase the likelihood of a successful holiday by doing your research first...

HOLIDAY NET
www.holidaynet.com
Site produced by the UK Travel Channel. Full of information on resorts and packages, plus video clips of many destinations.

LONELY PLANET
www.lonelyplanet.com
The independent traveller's bible with basic information about many countries, as well as health tips and travel-related news stories from around the world.

E-TRAVEL
www.etravel.org
Site written for backpackers and independent travellers *by* backpackers and independent travellers. Articles on many popular traveller destinations. Plus, tips on staying safe and well, what kit to take with you and places to avoid. It also has security pages on destinations like India, Mexico and Malaysia and, er, France (that well-known trouble spot).

THE BACK PACKER
www.thebackpacker.net
Useful site with travel tips and opinions. Worth a visit if only for its Beer Index, which tells you how much you might pay for a pint.

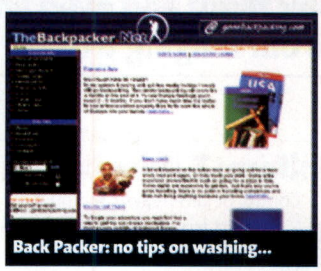
ONLINE FX
www.onlinefx.co.uk
Online currency ordering with next-day delivery. Zero commission and a buy-back facility.

OANDA.COM
www.oanda.com
Exchange-rate site listing all 164 world currencies, so if you want to know how many Albania leks there are to the pound look no further.

VISA
www.visa.com/cgi-bin/vee/main.html
Out of readies? Then this map, featuring the location of every Visa-friendly cash till in the world, could be a lifesaver.

FIT FOR TRAVEL
www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk
Health information and maps of malaria areas, plus details of other delightful disease hot-spots. Compiled by Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE
www.fco.gov.uk/travel
Official travel and visa advice, plus contact details for British embassies, consulates and missions abroad. Check out a Government's advice on travelling to its country before you book a flight.



Back Packer: no tips on washing...

Visa: cash across continents

Foreign Office: forewarned is forearmed

TIPS 4 TRIPS
www.tips4trips.com
Everything you need to know before and during your travels, submitted by 'people just like you'. Handy tidbits include: 'When going through the mountains and whatnot, bring cans of Spam' and 'Don't use foreign pay phones that only take credit cards' (one poor woman was charged about £270 for a 40-minute call from Italy).

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
www.wmo.ch
For up-to-date news on weather from around the world, this site has links to official sites in many different countries. Want the temperature in Adelaide or the rainfall in Malaysia? No problem.

SUN JOBS
www.sunjobs.co.uk
Looking to work while you travel? Then this site has details of vacancies in the tourist industry throughout Europe.

Bush Internet TV

Nothing on the telly tonight? No worries, just watch the Internet instead. Be among the first to own a Bush Internet telly by buying it on the Net. It's due to go on sale at this site any day now. The price is still to be fixed, but the cheaper models could cost less than £100.
www.factoryoutlet.co.uk

Square Truth Machine £29.95

Banish 'the cat ate my homework' stories forever. The Truth Machine measures changing stress levels in the voice and can even be used on the TV and radio – try it out during the next party political. UK delivery is free, but allow five days.
www.gadgetshop.com

Picnic rucksack £70

Wouldn't be seen dead with a sissy basket? Then sling this loaded knapsack over your back. Urbanfetch claims to deliver within the hour – at no charge – as long as you have the right London postcode.
www.urbanfetch.co.uk

RETAIL THERAPY

Tat from Viz, a supersonic flight and even an Internet telly – it's all in our bulging trolley

Uniform T-shirts £17.99

Control or lard freaks can find a T-shirt to suit here at London design group Form. There's no secure server yet so you have to post a cheque, adding £2 p&p per extra item; allow 30 days for delivery. ***www.uniform.uk.com***

Oakley Fives £55

As worn by little Tom in *Mission: Impossible 2* – well, not this pair exactly, but one just like them. If you crave the dancing baby seen in *Ally McBeal*, or long for a pestle and mortar just like Jamie Oliver's, look no further. In a triumph of contrived marketing, this site sells replicas of stuff you've seen on TV or in films. Delivery is free over £50; allow 14 days. ***www.asseenonscreen.com***

Styles ice cream £4.50 a litre

Why wait for the ice-cream van when you can get quality stuff from the farm? There's a £14 minimum order (+£6 p&p) so order in bulk. The dry-ice packing lasts 28 hours. ***www.styles-icecream.co.uk***

Supersonic fighter flight £7,900

A bit more exciting than a pair of socks – send your loved one on a supersonic flight in a Sukhoi Russian fighter.
www.buyagift.co.uk

VIZ hairloom £20

'A 100 percent work of Tat', but they can't make enough of these Elvis Presley Dambusters Clock Plates of Tutankhamen at Viz. Other 'Hairlooms' include the Life of Christ in Cats plate. Price includes 1p p&p; delivery time unspecified.
www.viz.co.uk/pitofshit/pitofshit.htm

Airfix Sukhoi £10.79

...Alternatively, if you only have tenner, buy this instead. Our kit arrived in 24 hours and the price includes delivery.
www.modernmodels.com

Duty-free CK1 £27

Duty-free prices – and no-one asks for your boarding pass? Yup, it's for real; we secured this bottle of CK1 at £27, £4 less than a high street price. Delivery is free; allow three days, but ours turned up in 24 hours. ***www.dutyfreeperfume.co.uk***

Wipe-Out CD cleaner £14.95

The elixir of life for your CD collection. Just one bottle can repair up to 40 damaged CDs; it reckons it can even repair a cat claw scratch. The Web address for sales was changing as we went to press, but call 01254 724533 for the new one.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT

THE NET'S TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

Keep to our simple guidelines, and there's no reason why online shopping should end in a puddle of tears

■ **CHECK THE SITE IS SECURE** A small padlock will appear in the bottom left of your browser to show that you can safely send credit card details through the site. Your Web browser will also tell you whether a site is secure or not when you enter it.

■ **SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES** As with any shopping, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of.

■ **CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES** Companies should tell you the delivery charge if there is one on their site. If you live in the Highlands and Islands or Ireland, you may find that free delivery does not apply.

■ **NEVER SEND ANYTHING BY EMAIL** If a site asks for card details by email, don't oblige. It's far, far easier for emails to be intercepted.

■ **PRINT THE CONTRACT** This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it, along with your order number and other details. Don't forget: if it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the High Street.

■ **IF IT GOES WRONG, DON'T WORRY** Contrary to scare stories, online shopping is safer and very often cheaper than traditional methods – and it's in the online store's interest to sort any problems out quickly.

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Or complete and return the order form to LIVE 2000 Box Office, PO Box 111, London, HA9 0YH

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	Number of tickets		
Thursday 21 September		adult ticket @ £8 each	£
		child ticket @ £4 each	£
Friday 22 September		adult ticket @ £8 each	£
		child ticket @ £4 each	£
Saturday 23 September		adult ticket @ £8 each	£
		child ticket @ £4 each	£
Sunday 24 September		adult ticket @ £8 each	£
		child ticket @ £4 each	£
Total free tickets claimed		Total Cost	£

FREE TICKET (1 free ticket for every 4 purchased)*

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If you do not wish to receive other information, please tick box. ☐

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I wish to pay by

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Card No ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Valid from / / Expiry Date / /

Issue No (Switch only) ☐☐

Signature ..... Date .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post code ..... Tel: .....

Email: .....

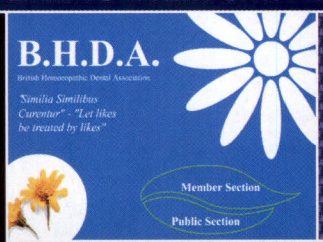
* Purchase four adult tickets in advance, in one transaction, all valid for the same day, and receive one ticket for the same day free.

CREDIT CARD HOTLINE 0870 736 2000

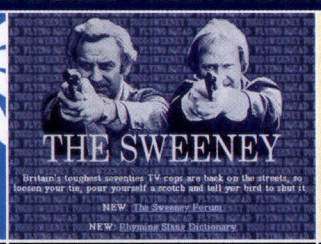
What Website?

THE BEST OF THE WEB REVIEWED EACH MONTH

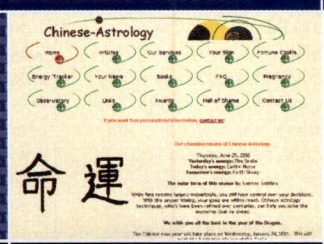
LINK TO EVERY SITE FEATURED FROM *www.thenetnow.co.uk*



p95 HEALTH Dentistry and pain



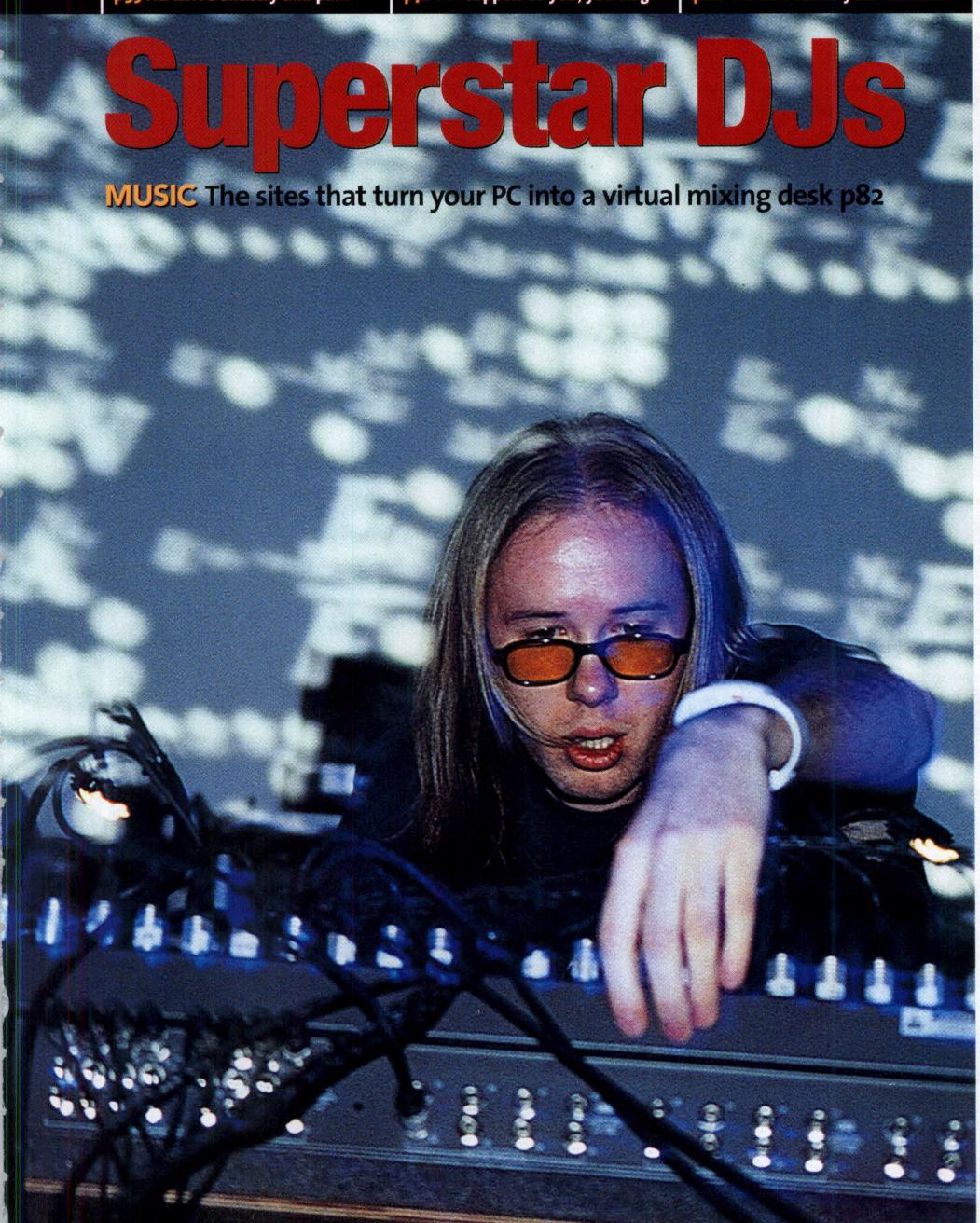
p78 TV 'Coppers to you, you slag'



p110 WEIRD Predict your future...

Superstar DJs

MUSIC The sites that turn your PC into a virtual mixing desk p82



PICTURES: ANGELA LUBRANO

SEPTEMBER 2000

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Look busy, it's the telly rozzers

MOVIES 80
When blockbusters go wrong

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Could you be the new Fatboy?

TRAVEL 85
The URLs that get you from A to B

SPORT CYCLING 87
Lose those stabilisers with the Web

SPORT WRESTLING 88
'Greetings, grapple fans.' The best of wrestling from both sides of the Atlantic

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What's in a name? Plenty, it seems

CELEBRITIES 91
Yes, even the Royals are wired...

HEALTH 95
Open wide for the best dentistry sites

MONEY 97
Web credit, and where to get it

ANIMALS 98
When nature attacks: the world's most vicious killers. Grrr...

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Get qualified from your couch

GAMES 101
The sports sims where you're the boss

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Buying kit with the Web

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Making a spectacle of yourself

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See into the future... no, really

NEED TO KNOW 113
Every site that's fit to print

TV COPS

'You're nicked, son!'

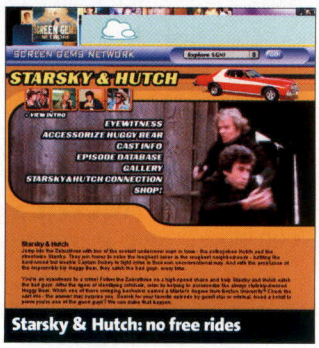
The long arm of the law also extends into cyberspace: meet the virtual cops who live on online

Starsky & Hutch

www.spe.sony.com/tv/shows/sgn/sh

★★★★★

The Zebrathree car, the bad cardies, the spin-off singing career, the pimp-dressing black friend – *Starsky & Hutch* took the well-entrenched cop-duo format and rooted it so thoroughly in the then-



Starsky & Hutch: no free rides

present that it now seems near to cliché. At this vibrant Shock site you can accessorise Huggy Bear and watch vids of crimes to help the boys, but you can't have a go in the car. Sorry.

Hawaii Five-O Home Page

www.mjq.net/fiveo ★★★★★

Der-der der DER derrr derrr... top tune, top show with Jack Lord as Steve McGarrett, local actors filling the cast and 'Book 'em, Danno' the catchphrase. Mike Quigley's site works harder than the most committed detective, unearthing all there is to know about HFO – right down to whose the swinging hips were on the titles.

The Bill

www.thebill.com ★★★

A decent attempt from the official site of the long-running ITV drama. Easy on the eye, it tries to cover every imaginable base, and there's an admirably high number of biogs of cast members past and present (the latter being 'Old Bill', arf). There are also 360-degree camera views of the inside of Sun Hill nick (although Bob Cryer's nose is sadly absent).

Cagney and Lacey

w3.one.net/~voyager/candl.html

★★★

The squealy sax solo theme tune prompted most blokes to leave the room – but the detective duo tend to inspire fervent female support, as proven here by a stamp of approval from WWWomen and a Sharon Gless interview with *Lesbian Times*. In fact there are dozens of articles on this wordy Web site, which sure ain't pretty but does its job well.

Hamish Macbeth

home.freeuk.net/dgal/hamish/index.html ★★★★

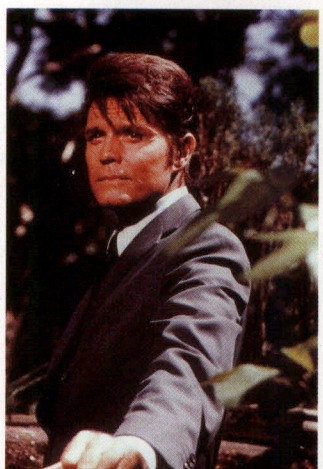
Just prior to starring in about seven Hollywood smashes at once, Robert Carlyle enjoyed himself playing the pot-smoking titular copper in this gently quirky BBC Scotland series. This site utilises the wry humour of the series and is as expansive as the Highlands, including a 20-page rumour-mongering newspaper and lots of location details so you can recreate the 'action'.

Dempsey and Makepeace

www.dempseyandmakepeace.de

★★★

The TV execs' meeting must have gone like a dream: team a hard- ▶


The ladybird would jaywalk no more

BEST TELEVISION SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND PROGRAMME GUIDES FOR POPULAR SHOWS?

www.onlyfools.net Shrine to *Only Fools And Horses*.

www.snpp.com/episodeguide.html Every *Simpsons* episode ever made is listed here.

www.beef-cake.com At-a-glance guide to *South Park*.

Pick up that special gift at tvtoys.com

BUY TV MEMORABILIA?

www.tvtoys.com Pick up TV toys, books – and more.

www.universal-studios.net/movieprops.html Head for the shop.

www.noveltytogs.com A great source for *South Park* and *Simpsons* stuff in pounds sterling.

FIND TV LISTINGS?

www.toaster.co.uk Electronic programme guide.

www.freeserve.com/tvnradio Use the handy instant soap update.

www.radiotimes.beeb.com The listings magazine online.

www.digiguide.co.uk Custom-built UK telly listings.

WATCH TV?

www.virtuetv.co.uk Live events and classic films.

www.dvtv.co.uk The UK's first Net-only station.

www.broadcast.com If it's going live, it'll be listed here.

www.livetv.wwitv.com Hook up with 100+ live TV stations around the world.

FIND TV NEWS AND INFO?

tv.cream.org One of the best sites for old shows.

www.bigglethwaite.com The definitive guide to all the British TV online.

www.ultimatetv.com US-biased; try the 'Ask Mr TV' facility.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.fan.hawaii-five-o Proof positive that good shows need never die with UseNet around.

GET CHATTING?

www.stormloader.com/coronation A regular *Coronation Street* discussion forum.

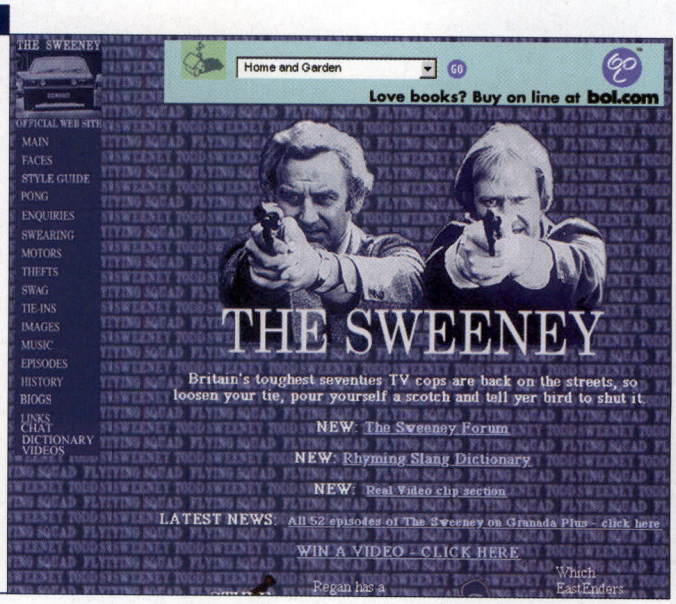
PICK OF THE NET

The Sweeney

www.thesweeney.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

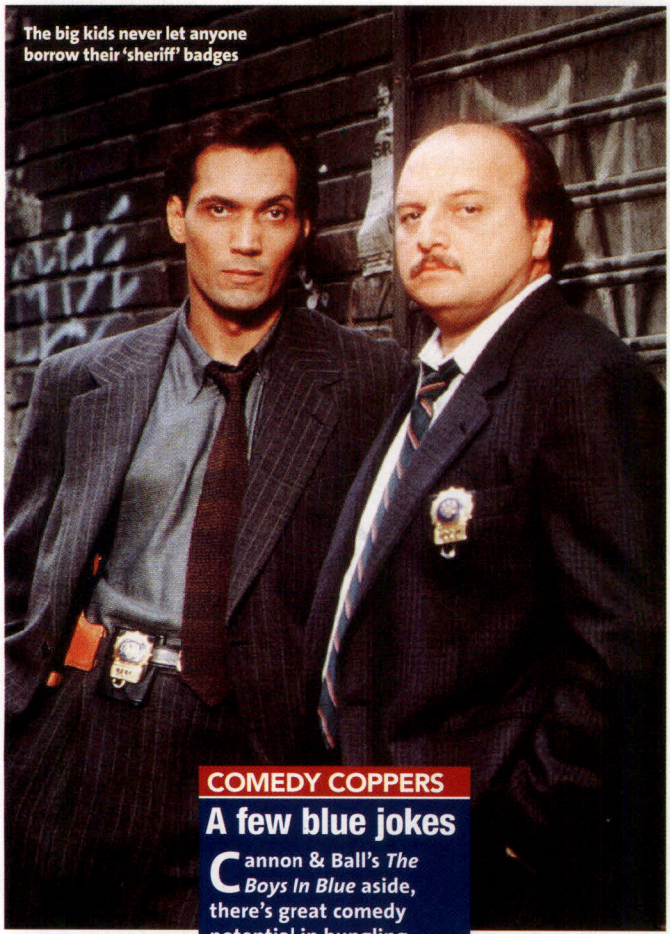
Before John Thaw was grumpy old Inspector Morse, he was angry young(ish) DI Jack Regan in this 70s smash which portrayed the Flying Squad as no angels; Dennis *Minder* Waterman stretched himself by playing opposite Thaw as a tough-nut Cockney copper. This super site is stuffed with cracking quotes in RealAudio (perfect for waking up the office), video clips, a period Pong game, a look at all the 'motors' used, a list of swearwords shouted and, of course, a word on slip-on shoes.



WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION, IMAGENET

'Shut it!'

TV COPS



The big kids never let anyone borrow their 'sheriff' badges

bitten Noo Yawk cop with an eyelash-fluttering English rose who just happens to be minor royalty *and* a Detective Sergeant to boot. If they'd have just spent longer on the scripts than they spent on thinking it up, they'd have been alright. Here you'll find fan fiction and a gallery, but the site's as thin as the premise.

NBC.com: Homicide:Life on the Street

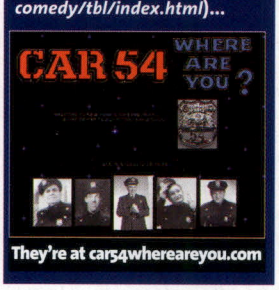
www.nbc.com/homicide ★★★★★

Half a decade before *Blair Witch*, *H:LOTS* utilised handheld cameras and arty monochrome shots to similarly acclaim. This concern for form is continued on the official Web site, which goes in for typewriter fonts and dark colours, but there's substance as well as style: included in the information are various behind-the-scenes interviews and interactive cases to keep fans interested until C4 decide on a godforsaken hour in which to broadcast the next series.

COMEDY COPPERS

A few blue jokes

Cannon & Ball's *The Boys In Blue* aside, there's great comedy potential in bungling bobbies – recognised back in the 60s with *Car 54 Where Are You?* (*www.car54wherareyou.com*). Leslie Nielsen perfected his Frank Drebin character in *Police Squad!*, at *www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Studio/1354/main.html*. And then there are unintentionally hilarious cop shows like *TJ Hooker* (*www.tj-hooker.com*), starring William Shatner's wig, or the predictable – witness Ben Elton and Rowan Atkinson's *The Thin Blue Line* (*www.phill.co.uk/comedy/tbl/index.html*)...



They're at car54whereareyou.com

Hill Street Blues

www.net-hlp.com/hsb ★★★★

One of the first US imports to be commercially and critically successful on these shores. From the plaintive piano theme to the bittersweet 'Let's be careful out there' roll-call mantra, it was thoughtfully and lovingly crafted – a bit like this site, which combines the usual (cast list, FAQ) with the obtuse (script inconsistencies and a Where are they now? section).

NYPD Blue

www.stwing.upenn.edu/~sepinwal/nypd.html ★★★

Oft described as 'gritty', *NYPDB* – the one with the short, bald detective whose family and friends die every other week – is certainly no barrel of laughs. This fan site is slow to load, mainly due to an overly large introductory graphic, but once you're in there are words aplenty: biogs, essays, reviews – even an *NYPD Blue* drinking game.

TURKEYS

Nice sites, shame about the movies...

They take years to make, cost millions of dollars – and still they suck. We salute the worst of cinema

The Postman

www.thepostman.com ★★★★

Pretentious post-apocalyptic pap with Kevin Costner as a saviour for the little people. The big people at Warner Bros put their weight behind the official site, on which you can see Quicktime panoramas of the set and archived Webcasts of the filming. It's like slowing down as you pass a road crash.

End of Days

www.end-of-days.com ★★★★

Arnold Schwarzenegger needs a few less yes-men around him, judging by this clunking calendar cash-in which see his character stopping Satan from impregnating an unlucky lady in the final hour of the millennium. No surprise then that the site has fiery writing; also no shock to find the downloadable soundtrack 'postcards' are by Guns n' Roses and Limp Bizkit.

Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie

www.powerrangersturbo.com ★★★

After the success of the *Mighty*

End-of-days.com: more fun than Arnie

'Aaaaaagh! Look at those reviews!'

The Mariner drank his own wee – preferable to watching *Waterworld*

Morphin Power Rangers, 20th Century Fox thought they could market anything turtle-related. They were wrong. This attempt sank like a stone, perhaps because it had no discernible plot. The colourful – oh alright, sickeningly bright – site is as kiddie-friendly as you might fear; you can print off your favourite Ranger to colour in at playtime.

Waterworld: Quest for the Mariner

www.mca.com/unicity/waterworld

★★★

No apologies for this being one of two Kevin Costner films here: if you make several three-hour vanity movies, you're there to be shot at. KC's reputation drowned as he helmed the super-expensive waterborne epic in which he stars as The Mariner, sailing the seas and drinking his own wee (which, some said, would be preferable to watching the film). This site is essentially a multimedia adventure in the style of those old RPG books in which you get to choose which way you go. In the film audience's case, it was generally home...

BEST MOVIES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

GET LATEST NEWS AND RELEASE DATES?

www.popcorn.co.uk British perspective on new releases.
aint-it-cool-news.com Gives the inside track on new films.
www.filmunlimited.co.uk Views and news from *The Guardian*.
uk.imdb.com The bible of online film – use the search engine or be lost.

DECIDE WHAT TO SEE?

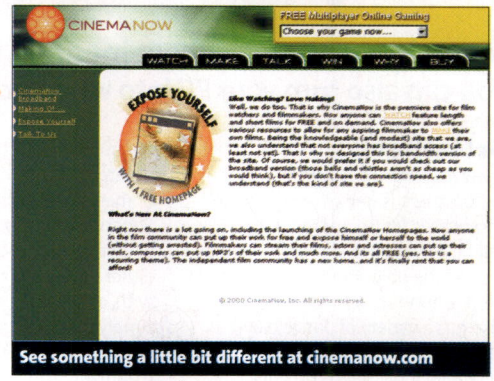
cinemachine.com Retrieves film reviews from across the Web.
www.filmreview.co.uk A UK-based review site to rival the Americans.
www.mrqe.com Flamboyantly-titled Movie Review Query Engine with 19,000+ films.
www.movie-trailers.com Trailers for all the newest films.

FIND OFFICIAL FILM SITES?

www.foxmovies.com Links to 20th Century Fox releases.
www.movies.warnerbros.com Site featuring WB's new films and lost classics.
www.disney.co.uk/DisneyMovies All the kids' faves in one.

WATCH OR POST AMATEUR SHORT FILMS?

www.cinemanow.com A portal site for new films from around the world.
www.getoutthere.bt.com BT-owned amateur movie site.
www.urban-chillers.com Scary new horror flicks to download.
www.sightsound.com The place to see *The Quantum Project* – the first full-length, full-budget Net film.



See something a little bit different at cinemanow.com

FIND A CINEMA?

www.uci-cinemas.co.uk A great search engine to locate current film screenings across the country.
www.odeon.co.uk To book online, or peruse the very latest information.
cinema.scoot.co.uk From the people behind the comprehensive directory.
www.cineworld.co.uk UK film portal that also includes a cinema finder.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.video.dvd Get the lowdown on that tricky new format here.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Discuss how to get films right by sending an email marked 'subscribe film-theory' to ***Majordomo@lists.village.virginia.edu***

GET CHATTING?

buzzcom.com Get the latest word and thoughts on all the new movies before they're released over here.

PICK OF THE NET

Honest

www.honestthemovie.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Know Thy Market: Eurythmics supremo and sometime film director David 'A' Stewart saw publicity potential in pretty popsters All Saints (bar Shaznay, who wrote the next album); timely breast-baring screengrabs appeared in the press, the certificate went up to 18... and the film was pulled from cinemas within a week after viewing figures were described as 'truly, truly awful'. The Flash-heavy site is worth checking out for the arty images and Quicktime movies. It wouldn't be sporting to say which ones feature nudity.

'Where's the cinema exit?'

Wild Wild West

wildwildwest.warnerbros.com

★★★

After *Men In Black*, pairing Will Smith with director Barry Sonnenfeld seemed like a good idea. Giving them a script rather than a special-effects list might have been a better brainwave. *WWW* crashed and burned despite a massive Warner Bros spend on the film, including this Web site, which looks the part and has loads of features but seems oddly empty. Fitting, that.

Movie Mistakes

www.movie-mistakes.com/films.htm

★★★

What Denis Norden would refer to as a compendium of cock-ups, this is a mammoth list of films in which elementary mistakes have been made. Its newsgroup origins are evident in its wordiness – it needs screengrabs to break up the text – and the Webmaster's 'Actually it was...' comments tend toward the smug, but an impressive effort for a 21-year-old at Southampton Uni.

Whoops! Movie Goofs

www.dlc.fi/~frog/whoops.htm

★★★

A similar, if not identical, concept to Movie Mistakes; it's not our responsibility to say who came first. There are over 500 films packed with bloopers. It scores over Movie Mistakes in the layout stakes: it's mainly A to Z, but spectacularly error-strewn films have their own pages – some even have pics. Woo!

Cock-ups galore: movie-mistakes.com

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

Bo, selecta!

Not only can you read about music on the Web – you can also turn your PC into wheels of steel

Getoutthere
www.getoutthere.bt.com ★★★★
Getoutthere is one of many online showcases for up-and-coming talent, although it extends to film as well as the ubiquitous MP3 format. More importantly for aspiring DJs it also has a variety of dance play-things, such as the excellent mixing desk which will keep you out of mischief. If you think you've spliced together something to rival Fatboy Slim you can submit it to the site for the rest of the world to hear.

SS7X7
www.ss7x7.com ★★★
There's no messing around on this site – it's straight into the world of music-mixing. Either download the free mixing desk to have uninterrupted fun on your desktop, or mess around online with the Shockwave version. There's also a huge range of songs you can either download and play around with, or alternatively you can simply mix them while you're on the site. There's even a facility to jam with others while you're there.

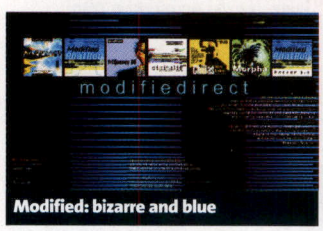
Getouthere's excellent mixing desk will keep aspiring DJs out of mischief

In the beginning were Kraftwerk

DJsounds
www.djsounds.com ★★★
This offering from Pioneer is excellent for anyone looking for their first set of decks or just wanting to mess around online. You can check out the whole range of Pioneer turntables and, more importantly, there's a choice of three to sample and tinker with on the site. Anybody stood near your machine will go stir crazy – but that's their problem.

Hobomusic
www.hobomusic.com ★★★★
Not much fun in the 'let's play around with this Shockwave game and see what happens' genre of many of the sites here, but more of a serious resource about music-making. There's all sorts of news and information with links to the best software and hardware. This is a veritable goldmine for anyone with an interest in the subject.

Online jamming at SS7X7



Modified: bizarre and blue

Mouse Jam
www.mousejam.com ★★★★
Another fun site to help you practice your mixing, thankfully

'How about these lenses? Any clearer?'

BEST MUSIC SITES ★★★★★
where can I?

FIND A BAND SITE?
www.ubl.com Go here first for the huge search engine.
www.bigmouth.co.uk UK-specific site with tons of links.
www.musicsearch.com Find artist sites or music services.
wallofsound.go.com Links and features from the US.

READ THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS?
www.rollingstone.com This US publication features extra online content.
www.nme.com The *NME*'s online version has a solid reputation for breaking news.
www.qonline.co.uk Increasingly essential online version of the popular magazine.
www.dotmusic.com British site for rock and pop news.

FIND GIGS AND TOURS?
www.ticketlinks.com Full database of musical events. Also includes theatre and performing arts.
www.aloud.com Brilliant search engine for gigs, with tickets to buy too.
www.sceneone.co.uk Easy to use entertainment portal.
www.wayahead.com Reliable and competitively-priced ticket service .

BUY NEW CDS?
www.yalplay.com Popular CD and video store.
www.audiostreet.com A cheap and easy-to-navigate store.

Catch up on the news at qonline.com

www.boxman.co.uk Competitive and easy on the eye.
www.cdnow.com One of the biggest CD stores.

FIND OUT ABOUT MP3S?
www.mp3now.com A good MP3 portal now in the UK.
www.mp3place.com Highly impressive database.
mp3.lycos.com Browse the world of MP3s.
www.mp3.com Heaps of downloads.

POST MY BAND'S MP3S?
www.crunch.co.uk Signs artists exclusively for the site.
www.peoplesound.com A popular unsigned band portal.
www.vitaminic.co.uk New MP3 site.
www.clickmusic.co.uk Excellent MP3 portal with downloads.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?
alt.music.makers.dj The best forum for digital musicians.

WATCH BANDS ONLINE?
Visit ***www.virtuetv.com*** for details of new RealVideo live shows.

GET CHATTING?
www.ibiza-magazine.com Talk to residents or tourists here.

with no promotion of any product so you can just mess around without any commercial presence. Simply let the rhythm section loop and you can add samples – which makes you wonder exactly what all those rich DJs get paid for.

Modified

www.cix.co.uk/~modified/ ★★★

If you can handle the bizarre blue lines wandering around this site, it's a great archive for 'interactive electronica' – whatever that means. You can find out about the different programs, test out a couple of demos online then buy them from the site if they take your fancy.

Home Recording

www.homerecording.com ★★★

Although this may not be the most attractive site on the Web,

PICK OF THE NET

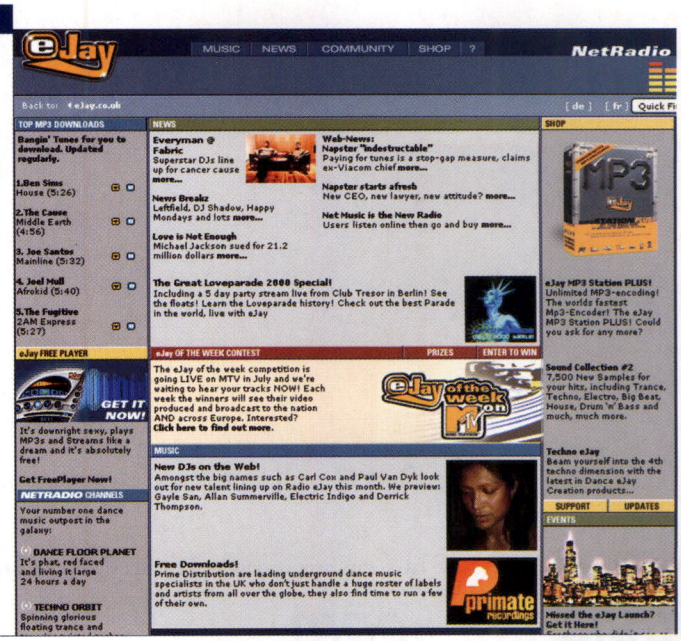
eJay

www.ejay.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If you're an aspiring Carl Cox then eJay is one of the finest bits of software you can get your hands on to practice mixing a few toons, and now it's also got a top-notch Web site. You don't need the software to enjoy it, although if you have you'll benefit from samples to download and mix as well as product updates. Anyone can download the eJay freeplayer and enjoy its five radio stations, or simply play back your own MP3 tracks at the desktop.

If you do fancy a bit of mixing, however, and can't afford the software, you can tinker with your tracks online using the Shockwave games.



WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: ANGELA LUBRANO, RETNA

From Palestrina to Santana, we have the largest online sheet music catalogue. So you can be sure you'll find exactly what you're after at musicroom.com.

Musicroom.com

Sheet music online

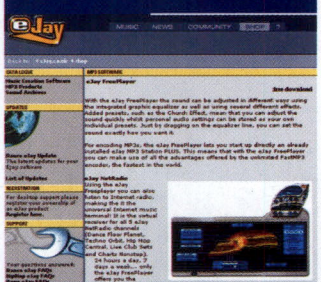
CARL COX

Prodigy, please

While playing around with mixing desks online and even buying dedicated computer software can be fun, you might feel that to make any strides in the world of mixing you'll have to spend serious money to get the right equipment. Not so, according to Carl Cox, when we caught up with him at the recent launch of eJay's Web site.

'I've just spent £100,000 building my own studio, but now I'm doing the same thing with eJay more or less for nothing,' says the top DJ. 'The software allows you to represent yourself as an artist. The British dance music scene is running out of time to find the next Prodigy. Hopefully we'll uncover plenty of talented people by doing this.'

Fame, money, tongue studs await. So get mixing!



eJay: as good as a £100,000 studio?

'The software allows you to represent your self as an artist'

there's plenty of great tutorials and tips about mastering the art of mixing. If it's online gimmicks you want there's a great little counter that measures the beats per minute of a song simply by getting you to tap your mouse button to the beat of the tune.

Scratch It

www.turntables.de ★★★

This site comes with very easy instructions: click 'enter'; wait; turn up volume; scratch it. If nothing else it'll save you a fortune on vinyl and

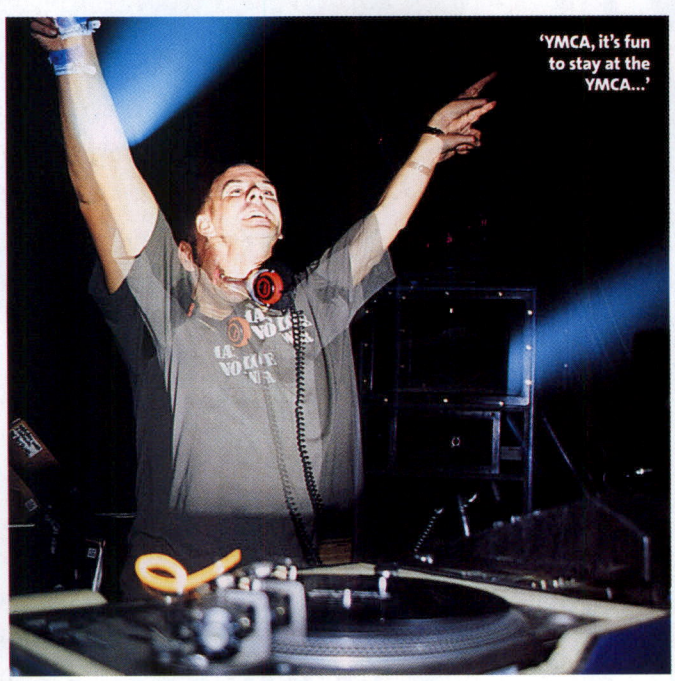
Itchy? Visit Scratch It

record needles. It must be somewhat galling for those who put even a modicum of creative effort into making a song, only for people to enjoy the noise of it being scratched to pieces more than your hard work.

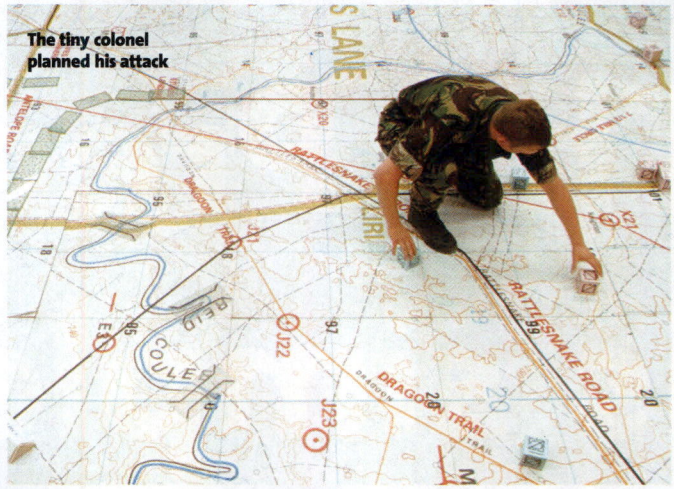
OnlineDJ.com

www.onlinedj.com ★★★★★

This excellent new site has a variety of online music mixers to annoy your workmates with. Choose from either Drum 'n Bass, HipHop, Jungle or House music, and play around with the various drum beats, samples and effects stored within each. This is one of the simplest online mixers to use and you can also check out various DJ articles and chat on the message board while you're there.



'YMCA, it's fun to stay at the YMCA...'



The tiny colonel planned his attack

'Do I need to draw a map?'

Getting from A to B couldn't be easier with the Net

Easymap

www.easymap.co.uk ★★★

This site looks impressive, with good quality maps, and it's easy to navigate. However, not only did it fail our obscure-cottage-in-Dorset test but it couldn't find a postcoded road in the suburban heartland of Surbiton. However, the OS is one of its business partners, and you can take advantage of a free map link to your own Web site.

Multimap

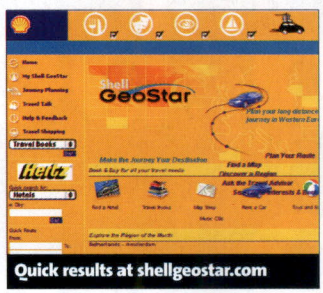
www.multimap.com ★★★★

Why cart around a mangy A-Z when you can print out a crisp and clean Multimap page instead? This is an office favourite, although its worldwide knowledge was mixed: we stumped it with a town on the Greek island of Lefkas, but it found Toowoomba in Australia (where our sub-editor has an auntie).

Ordnance Survey

www.ordsvy.gov.uk ★★★★

Where would we be without the Ordnance Survey? Lost, probably. Key in a location and a scrollable map of the area will pop up. You can make screen dumps of the map and download 10 images (see conditions). But don't abuse their goodwill; these images carry Crown Copyright and you don't want to be planning your route to the Tower.



Quick results at shellgeostar.com

Shell Geostar

www.shellgeostar.com ★★★★

This is one of our favourites because it returns its results very quickly. It covers 16 European countries and six languages, and is handy for walkers – so no longer do you have to humiliate yourself with complicated phrases like 'Ou est le Eiffel Tower?'.

PICK OF THE NET

Mapblast

www.mapblast.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If getting from A to B is one long round of U-turns, missed junctions and heated debates with your passenger, this is for you. Tell it where you are and where you want to go (use postcodes for best results) and it'll tell you how to get there in written steps, with an accompanying map – probably too much information, in fact, but you'll never take a wrong left turn again. It also covers the US and Europe – so you can plan everything from an ambitious fly-drive to a trip to the offie.

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: PA

The Premiership is simple. 20 teams chase a ball for 9 months, then United win.

Who'll stop them?
Place your Premiership bets at bluesq.com

BLUE SQ

Rules apply – See www.bluesq.com Over 18's only

Pedal power

With the Tour De France recently finished, now's the time to get on your bike and train for next year

Cyclery.com

www.cyclery.com ★★★★

This 'international cycling hub' features lots of American stuff but its touring section is useful for any peddler, spanning Hawaii to Hungary. If you're looking to turn your hobby into paid work, check out the Job Board, where vacancies include a bike tour guide on the Virgin Islands – 'mature, athletic and great with lg' (whatever that means). The UK equivalent, ***www.cyclehub.co.uk***, has a way to go yet but has good links to UK shops.

Fat Nick's

www.fatnick.com ★★★

Nick is, in his own words, grossly overweight, horribly unfit, but a very enthusiastic track cyclist who has the good fortune to live near the Manchester Velodrome. Big Nick became a dad recently and has neglected parts of the site, but it's still the place to come for track reports and fixtures. It also links to a site covering the World Masters Track Cycling Championships in Manchester in September at ***www.worldmasters.freeserve.co.uk/index2.htm***

Sustrans

www.sustrans.co.uk ★★★★

'Get on yer bike', says Sustrans, but not in a Norman Tebbit way. It stands for sustainable transport and they want us to get out of our cars and on to our cycles, or feet, to reduce traffic problems. Stretching for those pedals already? Then log on here for the National Cycle Network and search for safe cycle routes in your area.

Tour de France 2001

www.letour.fr/2001/us ★★★★

It's over for another year but if you want to arrange next summer's holiday to coincide with the 2001 event, this is the place. And the good news is it's just a hop for us Brits to be in right at the start, with Nord Pas-de-Calais the starting point. You can also bag a yellow 'leader' jersey for 76 Euros – but don't expect it to get you any respect in the cycle lanes.

BEST SPORT SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

JOIN A TEAM?

www.sportlive.net Check out the 'grass roots' section for links to hundreds of local teams.

www.intheteam.com Build yourself a mini-site for your club, featuring news and fixtures.

BUY ACCESSORIES ONLINE?

www.newitts.com A great, comprehensive online sports store – whatever your sport, you'll find the kit here.

www.kitbag.com The best place to buy new football strips and various merchandise.

LEARN A MARTIAL ART?

www.blackbeltmag.com First choose your fighting discipline, then log on here to master the basics.

www.kungfu.cc Kung-fu course with some very useful online tutorials. Kicking!

LEARN THE RULES?

www-uk.cricket.org Cricket's home page.

www.referee.com You're certain to get your rule questions answered here.

FIND A NEW SPORT?

www.sportszine.co.uk Thorough site with comprehensive links to UK sites, from athletics to wrestling.

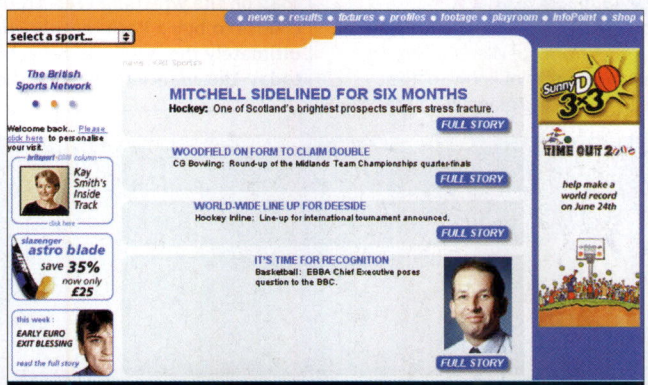
www.britsport.com This covers all the sports (cycling, hockey etc) that the bigger sites tend to overlook.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.bicycles.racing Follow the Tour De France with fellow fans.

GET CHATTING?

www.4-lane.com/sportschat Boards for 20 popular sports – swap sporting prowess stories here.



Follow the latest in sports both big and small at britsport.com

PICK OF THE NET

Cycle Web

www.cycleweb.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

'Did you know the British cycle industry is treated as a joke on the continent?' asks the opening editorial. And Cycle Web doesn't disagree with Johnny Foreigner – which gives you some idea that this site tells it like it is. It's not the most beautiful site in the world, but you can tell it's by cyclists for cyclists and is highly interactive and comprehensive: you can take part in surveys and competitions (they were giving away a Met Parabellum helmet, worth £79); there's a Q&A section; you can take a Web page on the site; and it has cycling-related holidays, shopping, hiring, publications and clubs well covered. Sites like this are what the Net is all about.

Complete: cycleweb.co.uk

The cyclist cull began in earnest

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: PA

WRESTLING

'Greetings, grapple fans'

Check out the sites that pay homage to this shy and retiring sport...

British Wrestling

www.britishwrestling.cwc.net ★★

There was a time, before a bunch of bouffant Yanks turned the whole thing into a pantomime, when pro wrestling was king in British homes. Every Saturday, at 4pm, Dickie Davis would take us over to somewhere like the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, for an hour's worth of choreographed mayhem. If the names Kendo Nagasaki and Johnny Saint bring back memories of sweat and stretch pants, head here; but if Big Daddy and Les Kellett mean anything, don't bother – there's no mention of them in this frustratingly patchy fan site.

Pat Roach – the Official Web Site

www.patroach.co.uk ★★★

You'll recognise him as gentle giant Bomber from *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, but you might not know that Pat Roach was a top grappler before he turned to acting. So delight in his home-grown Web site, where you can buy a signed photo of the big man roughing up Sean Connery in *Never Say Never Again* and put your name down for personal coaching at Pat's gym in Birmingham.

Wrestle UK

ucwonline.com/wrestleuk ★★★

Sadly, the Americanisation of the sport seems all but complete. UK bouts now consist of pasty-white WWF wannabes, affiliated to a bewildering number of acronyms, slapping canvas in front of 'crowds' of 250 people. It's all a far cry from the glory years of the 70s, but the enthusiasm of hardcore fans – such as the people behind Wrestle UK – is undiminished. Read their candid reviews of local rumbles, although you'll need to know your rolling suplexes from your inverted DDTs.

Wrasslin

www.wrasslin.co.uk ★★★★

This offshoot of Europe's most popular wrestling site divides its attention between results from the States and the British and continental circuits. A suspiciously large amount of news seems to concern the Frontier Wrestling Association (Jonny Storm! 'Hazardous' Paul Travell!), but it's all nicely put together. Incidental pleasures include streaming audio commentaries and an endorsement by the Duke of Westminster, no less.

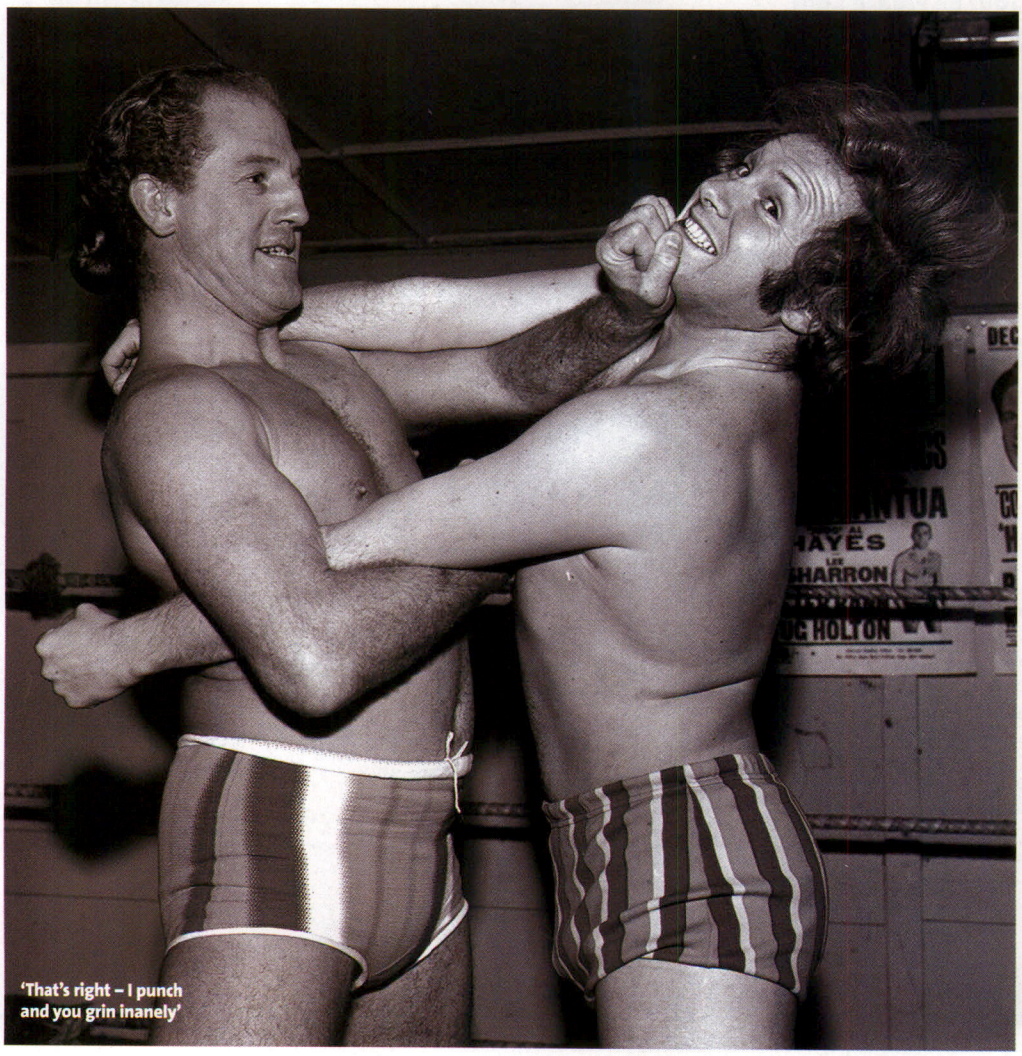
PICK OF THE NET

World Wrestling Federation

www.wwf.com ★★★★★

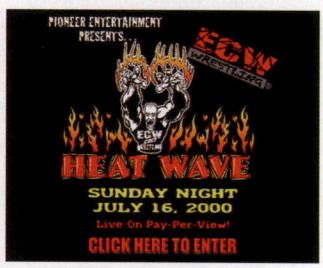
thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

It was the WWF which turned wrestling from a harmless bit of fun into the multi-million dollar panto it is today, and after some lean years they're on the top of their game again. With stars like the Rock and 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin, the WWF is cleaning up, and its huge multimedia site squats like a toad on the wrestling Web. From streaming audio to the exciting chance to buy a Rock toothbrush there's hours of fun here, but ultimately the WWF site reflects the true nature of pro wrestling today: the chance to make bucketfuls of cash.



'That's right – I punch and you grin inanely'

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: PA



The pre-match exchange of insults count as highly as your contestant's skill

VIRTUAL WRESTLING

Fantasy leagues

If you want to experience the thrills and spills of the pro game without the risk of a 32-stone hyperthyroidal giant landing on your head, try one of the dozens of electronic wrestling games on the Net. From simple Top Trumps-style versions to fantasy wrestling leagues all the way to bouts conducted by email (in which the pre-match exchange of insults counts as highly as your contestant's skill), there's a game for every grapple fan. Take your pick at ***www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Arena/7148***.

BEST SPORT SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND THE LATEST NEWS AND SCORES?

espn.go.com Sports scores galore, with a US bias.
www.sportlive.net *Express* site with news and info.
www.soccernet.com Scoreflashes from all UK games.
www.sporting-life.com News, scores and betting advice.

FIND TOP FOOTBALL SITES?

www.football365.com Humour, news and plenty of features.
www.onefootball.com Live scores and news from Europe.
www.teamtalk.com Club news.
www.soccer-links.com Well-organised links for world sites.

PLACE AN ONLINE BET?

www.bluesq.com Best-known and easiest-to-use online bookie.
www.victorchandler.com User-friendly site from the traditional bookie.
www.sportingindex.com The biggest spread-betting site on the Net.
www.vipsports.com New gambling site covering a variety of sports.

FOLLOW EVENTS LIVE?

www.planetfootball.com Hub site for English football clubs' audio broadcasts.
www.sportlist.com Guide to every sports show on British TV.
www.talksport.net Listen to the radio station's sports coverage live.
www.broadcast.com/sports/soccer A variety of teams in RealAudio.

FIND THE BEST SITES FOR POPULAR SPORTS?

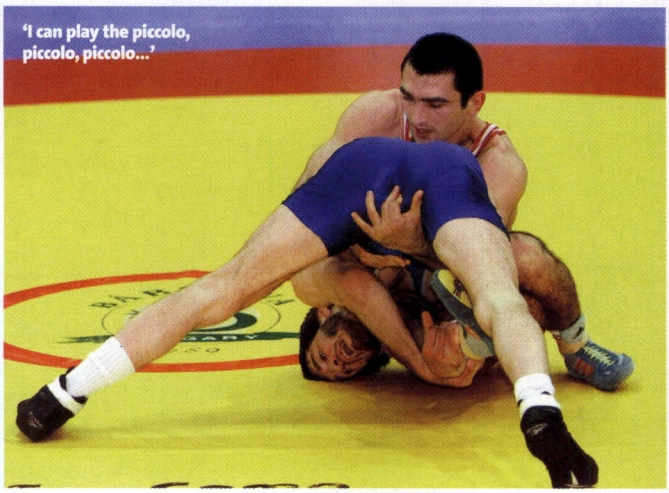
uk.cricinfo.com Celebrated cricket portal. An essential bookmark.
www.tennis.com Does for tennis what Cricinfo does for cricket.
www.golfalot.com For the fan and player alike.
www.boxingonline.com The online king of the ring.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.sport.pro-wrestling The best forum for WWF enthusiasts.

GET CHATTING?

www.4-lane.com/sportschat A variety of boards for most popular sports.



'I can play the piccolo, piccolo, piccolo...'

World Championship Wrestling

www.wcw.com ★★★

Ted Turner's boys are pinned against the ropes by the might of the WWF, and their site – littered with has-beens such as Hulk Hogan – reflects that. Ultimately a site's as good as its wrestlers, and the WCW needs new blood. Frankly, the chance to purchase WCW Nitro Cologne ('confidence with that hint of sophistication') is no substitute.

Extreme Championship Wrestling

www.ecwwrestling.com ★★★

Just as WCW Nitro crept up on a complacent WWF and stole their crown a decade ago, so ECW – motto: 'Hardcore Wrestling' – are winning over both trailer trash and screaming grannies alike. Find out more about brash wrestlers like Cyrus the Virus at this site, which makes up for what it lacks in content with sheer exuberance.

BAWA

wwww2.prestel.co.uk/bawa ★★★★

If you're one of those killjoys who love to point out that pro wrestling has a whiff of, well, showbiz about it, stick with the grapplers on the British Amateur Wrestling Association site. These boys are twisting limbs and twanging leotards purely for the thrill of the sport, and even when they're not in the ring they're downloading desktop wrestling jigsaws from the site's 'Freebies' section.

You're calling him *what*?

Stuck for a name for your sprog? Check these out

Babynames.com

www.babynames.com ★★★★

This site looks promising, but it's not as easy to use as some of the others – you have to search by name or meaning. It does offer a personal naming service, though: a snip at $19.95 (all major credit cards accepted). And the lists of names are useful – although the suggestion that you call your child after either a Shakespearean character (such as Froth or Snug) or one from *Sunset Beach* or might lead to some serious grief in the playground.

I-Ching Lucky Numbers

www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/luckyNum.htm ★★★★

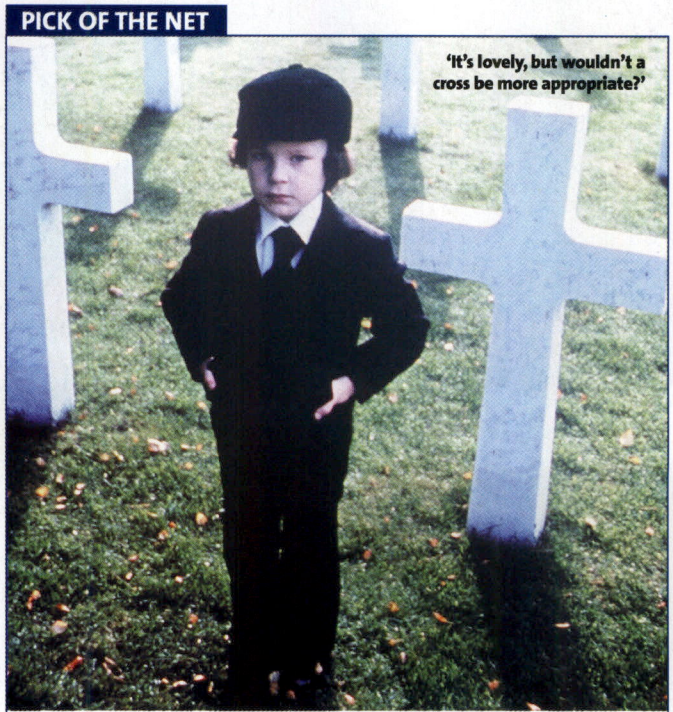
It might be a tad confusing (something seems to have been lost in the translation – like sense), but you want the best for your baby, so stick with this site to find a lucky name. The principle is explained – basically it depends on how many letters are in the name – and follow the instructions to choose a name which will 'wish our baby having a better luck in his life'. Fine, but we're not sure about the suggestion that 81 letters in your name is a good thing.

Popular Baby Names

www.popularbabynames.com ★★★★

For the sake of your child it's probably wise to follow the useful hints on this site – nuggets include 'consider the sound of the name', 'be prepared for a nickname' and 'be aware of tongue-twisters' – after all, they'll have to live with it at least until they're 16. The site's also great for regional and religious names (Hindu, Gaelic, Russian) and you can add those you like to a shortlist. Or ask others their opinion on the discussion board – but don't always expect a serious answer.

PICK OF THE NET



'It's lovely, but wouldn't a cross be more appropriate?'

Babyzone

www.babyzone.com/babynames ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If you've got the proverbial bun in the oven then you can do worse than head to Babyzone. Apart from loads of baby info, there are lists of names and meanings, celeb baby names (perhaps 'Sailor' – well, it's what Christie Brinkley chose) – even logical names for twins (such as Nadia and Aidan – think about it). Most fun, though, is the Name Inventor, which takes your moniker, turns it around and spits out possible sprog titles; it came up with the preposterously humorous 'Ssh' when we visited.

For more kids sites, turn to Need To Know on page 113

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURE: KOBAL COLLECTION

HOW TO SAVE THOUSANDS ON A NEW U.K. CAR

No dealers. That's how we do it. Special deals with thousands of pounds off the manufacturers' list prices. Virtually any make or model. Delivered straight to your door.* A seven day return policy. Guaranteed online trade-ins. Come and visit us at www.jamjar.com.

jamjar.com
a direct line company

THE PLACE TO PICK UP A CAR FOR LESS

car buying | trade-ins | special offers | shopping | rental | route planning | magazine

*Excluding N.Ireland

Every month, Charles threw a banquet for his fruit and veg

Keeping it in the family

Whether you're a Wills-watcher or a fan of more exotic Monarchy, the Web is a haven for your obsession...

The Royal Archive

www.royalarchive.com ★★★★

Too many of the Royal homages on the Web descend all-too readily into the kind of maniacal gibbering most frequently seen from the permanently incarcerated. Royal Archive is a somewhat more sober, though distinctly unbalanced, view of the British monarchy, collating all the latest news from the Press, plus biographies and a shop.

Royal Watch

www.btinternet.com/~cameron1 ★★

Bizarre paradoxes of Internet publishing no.247: despite devoting thousands of words to the evils of the media and the way they ruin the Royals' lives, Royal Watch (the Web site) thrives on the kind of speculation the tabloids publish day in, day out. Hmm. Still, if you can stomach Alan Partridge-isms like 'the Paparazzi have a finger in his pie of pressure' there's plenty of tittle-tattle here.

The Unofficial British Royal Family Pages

www.etoile.co.uk/Royal.html ★★★

As the messageboards here attest, the world outside these isles has always been more fascinated with the Royal family than the Brits themselves. This site is even run by a Dutch woman. Check here for news, Royal engagements and the ubiquitous fawning Diana tribute page – 'a twinkle in the heavens... a ray of sunshine to all she met.'

The Prince Of Wales

www.princeofwales.gov.uk ★★★★

Charlie's a pretty forward-looking fella, and as such it's no surprise that he's the only major Royal to boast his own site. Though HRH appears to visit only sporadically there's a wealth of content here, including news, picture galleries and a database of his speeches with which to bore friends and family half to death.

A Different Look At Prince William

come.to/Prince_William ★★★

Only his mother inspires more ▶

PICK OF THE NET

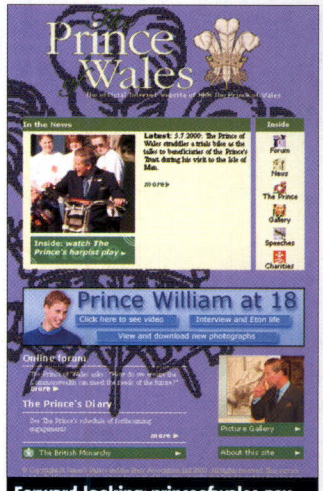
The British Monarchy

www.royal.gov.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

You wouldn't expect a site sanctioned by the Royals themselves to be a barrel of laughs; to be fair, though, The British Monarchy caters perfectly for the assorted army of bored housewives and neurotic Americans that constitutes the Royal-watching community. Want to know if the Queen carries a passport? Ever wondered how many letters Her Maj gets a day? Look no further. With an extensive links section, palace guide and downloadable family tree, there are plenty of other British institutions which could learn a lesson or two from the Windsors.

Lots of purple at royal.gov.uk



Forward-looking: princeofwales.gov

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURES: REX FEATURES

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It's easy to make friends or build relationships with udate. Our sophisticated matching system and extensive membership database provides more choice, more places, more fun. And because you have total 'on-line' control, you can build the relationship you want at your own pace. To find out more go to www.udate.co.uk and click now.

udate.co.uk

The uk's largest global internet dating service

devotion among the Web community than Prince William – most of it the hormone-fuelled ranting of teenage girls the world over. ADLAPW, despite its URL, tries to take a slightly more measured approach to the whole subject, with an almost sociological examination of the Wills phenomena. There's still a section on his favourite food, mind you...

The Royal Court of Sweden

www.royalcourt.se/eng ★★★★★

While our Royals have paid lip service to the idea of an interactive Web site, those crazy Swedes are leading the way in Net rule. Log onto the official site here and you'll find info on every Royal, plus info and pictures of palaces – and even details of the Royal accounts.

Royal Families Of The World

www.royalfamily.com ★★★★

If you thought the concept of Royalty extended no further than these shores, think again. As this well-researched and cleanly-designed site proves, there are monarchies the world over: Bulgaria and Liechtenstein to Burundi and Tonga. Links are provided to both official and unofficial sites – and there are some

Swap, anyone? Royalfamily.com

Royal families out there who make ours look positively stable.

Brunei

brunei.sultanate.com ★★★★

When they decided they needed a monarchy in Brunei, they didn't do it by halves. Their Royal Family's wealth makes our own look pitiful; and the Sultan himself, snappily known as His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddulah, acts as ruler, Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Defence Minister. This semi-independent site keeps you up-to-date on news and tourism.

The Principality Of Sealand

www.sealandgov.com ★★★★

Sealand, it says here, 'is the world's smallest sovereign territory' (an island fortress in the North Sea). It's ruled by Roy Bates, aka Prince Roy of Sealand, and is recognised by major governments. Or it would be, if it wasn't a figment of Bates' fevered imagination. But never mind that: delve into its rich 'history' and enjoy. ■

INDECENT PROPOSALS

A battle of Wills

The Internet, we're always told, allows you to change your identity at the click of a mouse. But while many of us may dream of being royalty, few would get away with impersonating a member of Britain's premier family. Amazingly, that's just what happened to one Londoner last year, when he set up a 'joke' email account in Wills' name. Said account then got listed in the WhoWhere directory – and the messages flooded in: indecent suggestions, proposals of marriage and scarily obsessive rantings. Even when the owner exposed it as a hoax, many didn't understand. Read the whole story (and the hilarious emails) at ***members.tripod.co.uk/willnot***.

There are some monarchies out there who make ours look positively stable

Another hunt saboteur bit the dust

BEST CELEBRITIES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND GOOD GOSSIP?

www.mrshowbiz.com The fastest track to loads of gossip, with the odd exclusive, too.

www.celebritypalace.com Plenty of gossip, plus lots of links and handy resources.

FIND A STAR'S ADDRESS?

www.barringtons.com/EmailDir Impressively lengthy list of addresses – both verified and unofficial.

www.celebrityemail.com Over 14,000 celebs on its pages, from supermodels to princes. Forwards your messages automatically.

READ MAGAZINES?

www.eonline.com The latest happenings in the worlds of music, TV, film and video.

www.people.com Online version of the popular American *People* magazine.

FIND CELEBRITY HOME PAGES?

www.celebsites.com Links to official sites of celebs from all walks of fame.

www.usfanclubs.com Masses of links to official sites and fan clubs for all kinds of celebs.

MEET MY HERO?

www.yack.com Updated list of celebrity events on the Net, including chat opportunities.

www.iknewthemwhen.com Meet the stars before they were famous.

BUY CELEBRITY ITEMS?

celebrityconnection.com/index.html The place to buy and sell memorabilia.

www.starzstuff.com All sorts of memorabilia from the world of movies, TV and music.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.talk.royalty If you have a particularly strong point of view about the monarchy, discuss the ins-and-outs of them – and of other Royal families from around the world – here.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

If you've got reason to believe you might be related to royalty, join the 'royagen' list from ***www.onelist.com*** and natter away to fellow bluebloods..

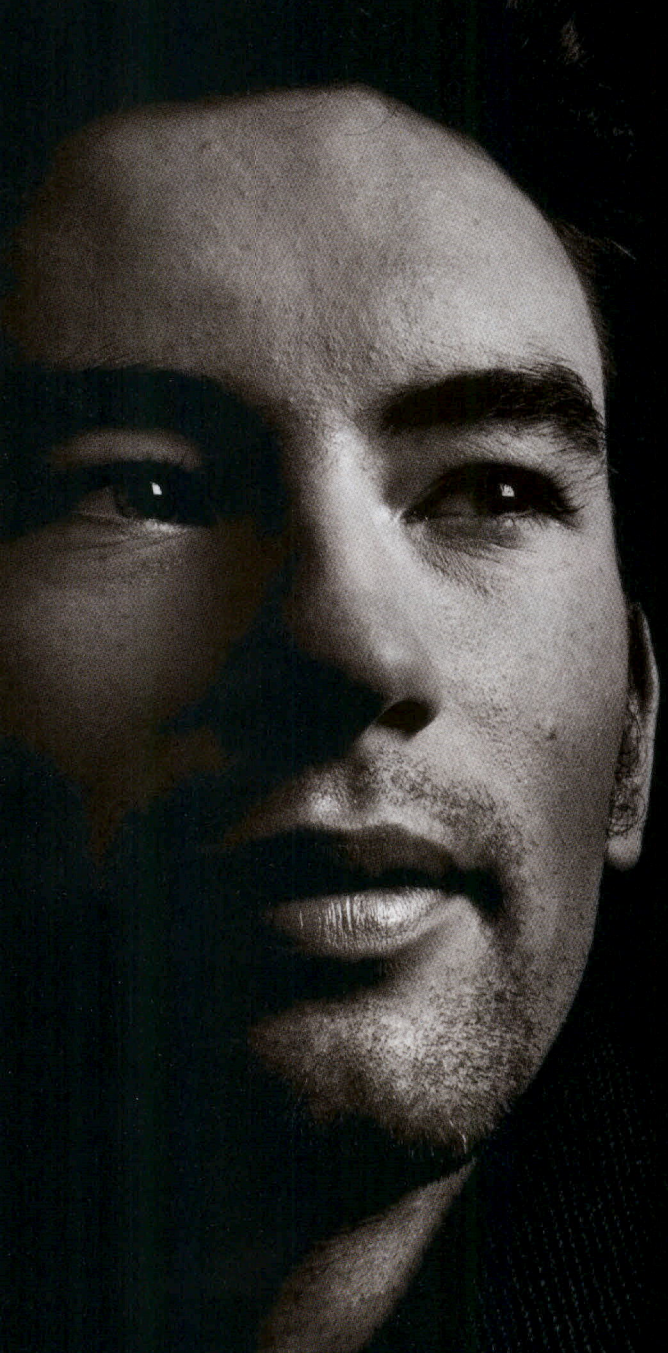
GET CHATTING?

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studio/6632

Yes, this is a whole chat room devoted to Prince William. Heaven help us.

Read the latest celebrity gossip at the popular people.com

GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM THE INTERNET



Do you want **FREE** Internet access and a fast and reliable service that gives you superb content and helps you get the information you want quickly and easily?

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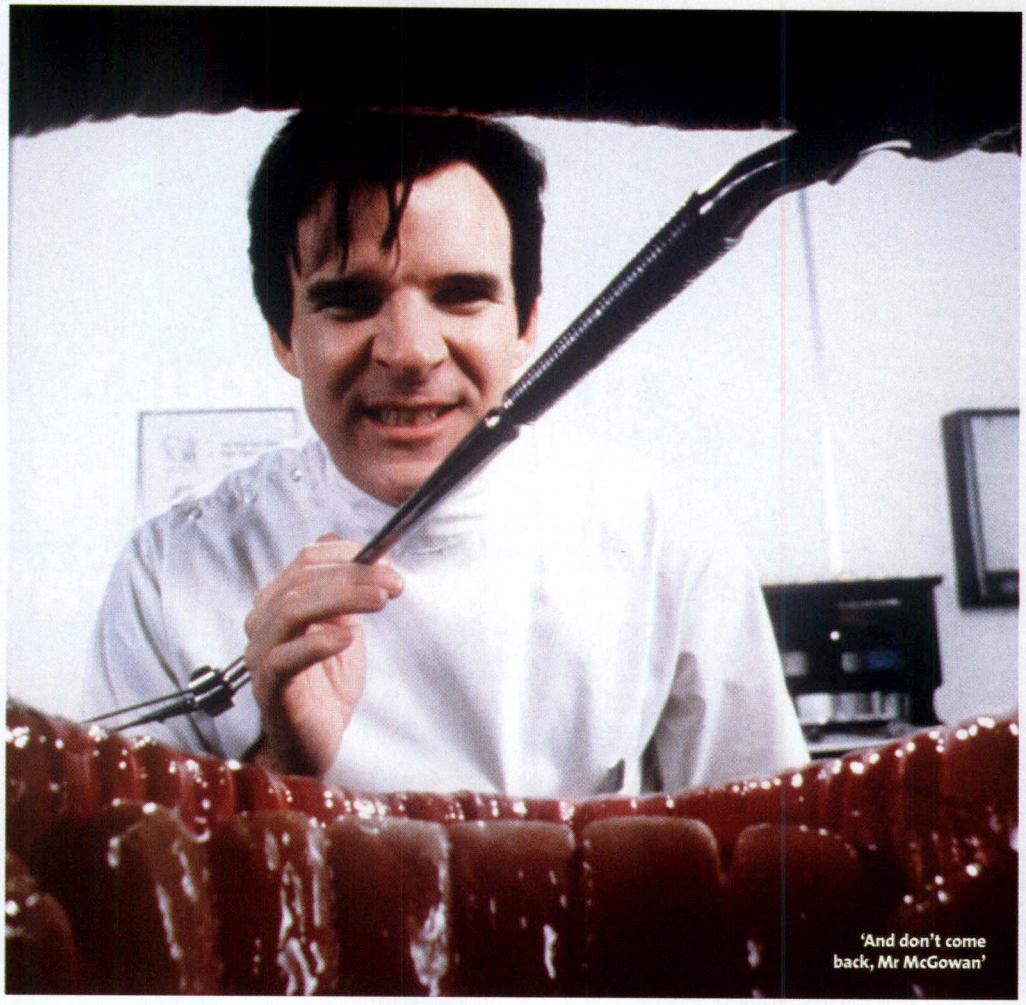

'And don't come back, Mr McGowan'

'Now you won't feel a thing...'

Stop mouth-rot with the help of the Web

British Dental Association
www.bda-dentistry.org.uk ★★★★

The 'Find A Dentist' search facility lets you track down a local BDA member, and the FAQ section has loads of straightforward information about procedures like root canal and fitting teeth veneers. The site also lists thrilling BDA seminars, such as 'Understanding Anxiety' or 'Combating Bad Breath.' Whether that's the patient's or the dentist's anxiety and bad breath, we'll never know – best not to think about it too much, we reckon.

The British Dental Health Association
www.dentalhealth.org.uk ★★★★

Easy-to-use, brilliant site from the people who sponsor National Smile Week. There's fun stuff for kids, low-sugar recipes for healthy pearly whites and a general feeling that dentists are not all bad. On the more serious side, they check manufacturers' claims about dental products (there's a list of approved toothpastes), and issue warnings about items that are highly dangerous to oral health, like gutkha, a sweetened chewing tobacco, imported from India and marketed to children.

The British Homeopathic Dental Association
www.bhda.org ★★★

Impressive site full of animations of comforting flowers without a drill or brace in sight (or sound, thankfully). Homepathic remedies can, apparently, help calm an anxious patient, numb the pain of sore teeth and heal the mouth after dental work. There's a map of homeopathic dentists in the UK, and a links page which is promised to be up and running soon.

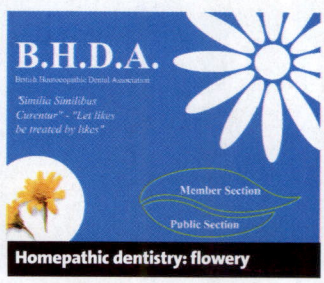
The Dental Anxiety and Phobia Association
www.healthyteeth.com ★★

DAPA was set up to help people with an overwhelming fear of visiting the dentist – 23 per cent of the population, for instance, would rather suffer toothache than go and get it fixed. It offers videos about hypnosis to overcome the anxiety or CDs entitled 'Eliminate your fear of the dentist' and you can also read case studies of people who have been helped. Take Emma, 27, who hadn't been to a dentist since she was 15 and who used DAPA's deep relaxation techniques to see her through six fillings and some root canal work. Ouch.

Strange as it may seem, there are some people who want to become dentists

Dental Educational Resources
www.derweb.co.uk ★★★

Strange as it may seem, there are people out there who want to become dentists. This is a huge site full of help and resources for those interested in drilling for a living. There's a list of job opportunities in surgeries all over the country, including vacancies for dental nurses and receptionists, plus gruesome full-colour case studies of gum and teeth complaints like periodontitis.



Homepathic dentistry: flowery

Dentsure
www.dentsure.co.uk ★★★

Put your money where your mouth is and check out the gold tooth jewellery on this site. How about a treble clef (a reasonable £46.95) or an alien face (a more hefty £93.95)? The site also sells serious hygiene regimes that tackle various

PICK OF THE NET

The Brompton Dental Clinic

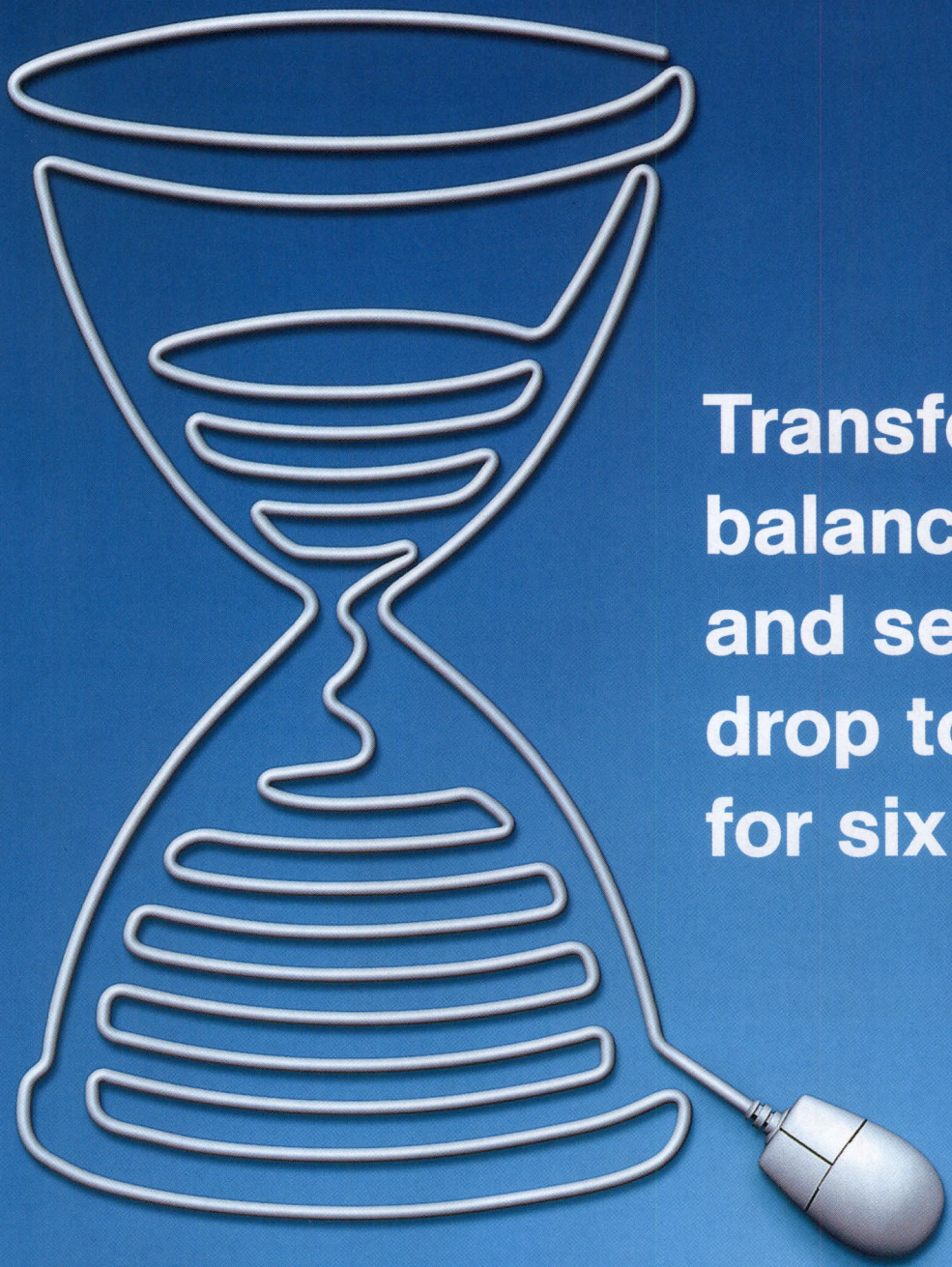
thenet AWARD

www.mercuryfree.co.uk ★★★★★

Practitioners Robert Hempelman and Jack Levenson have set up this site to promote their belief in mercury-free dentistry. Mercury is more poisonous than lead or arsenic so walking round with a mouth full of it, even if it is amalgam, doesn't seem like a good idea. Conditions like asthma and ME have been found to improve when people's old fillings were replaced with white ones, and there are plenty of articles here on how the mercury in your mouth could be affecting your health. There's also a page for kids featuring Tula, a post-modern tooth fairy in DMs and Ray-Bans, who helps children look after their teeth.

WORDS: VICTORIA WILLIAMS; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

egg: card



Transfer your balances online and see your rate drop to 2.5% APR for six months.

	Standard Rate % APR	Balance Transfer Rate % APR
Egg Card	10.9	2.5*
MBNA International (Visa)	18.9	3.9*
Barclaycard (Visa)	19.4	5.9†
Capital One Platinum (Visa)	12.9	7.9†

Source: Moneyfacts. *Offered for 6 months. †Offered until balance transfer is paid off. The Barclaycard Standard APR does not include the annual fee.

Clock this. Egg Card – the online credit card – offers you a rate of **2.5% APR** for six months when you transfer your current credit card balances online. And after this you'll enjoy our standard rate of just **10.9% APR**. But then, this is no ordinary piece of plastic. Designed for the Internet, it allows you to apply for and manage your card online. To cap it all, you'll even receive cash back every time you use your card: **1%** on all purchases and up to **2%** online. So go straight to **www.egg.com** Time's clearly up for your old plastic.

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APRs (variable): **10.9%** standard rate, **2.5%** for balance transfers for the first six months and **13.2%** for cash advances (including 1.25% handling fee (minimum £2)). Repayments are monthly, with a minimum payment of the full outstanding balance if less than £5, but otherwise the greater of 3% of the balances and £5. Other charges are for paper statements (£2 each) and for telephone calls relating to standard services or for information available on our website (£2 per call). A variable amount will be charged for other non-standard services provided. Egg Cards are available (subject to status) to UK residents who have regular Internet access and are aged 18 years and over. Egg Card rates are correct as at 19/6/00. All other rates shown in the comparison table are correct as at 14/6/00 and are standard published rates, excluding

unpleasant oral problems, and offers plenty of advice about finding the right dentist (one that isn't a sadist, please). Product testing and Toothy Tips complete a useful site.

Whiter Teeth

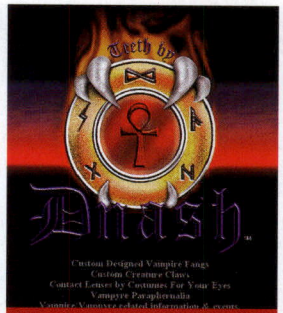
www.whiterteeth.com ★★★

The one thing that really separates the average American from their English counterpart is their set of gleaming white gnashers. Whiter Teeth is a US-based site that takes you through all the options if you're serious about wanting your teeth bleached. Although not all of the treatments have been approved for use in the UK, there is still plenty of info on whitening products.

Word of Mouth

www.wordofmouth.org.uk ★★★

A simple, well-designed site for those seeking free advice about any dental problem. There's an exhaustive list of FAQs, but if you still can't find what you're looking for then send them a specific query and they will email you back two working days later (hopefully your teeth won't have dropped out and your gums rotted by then). All answers are monitored by The Faculty of General Dental Practitioners.



COMEDY TEETH

Fanging around

If you're hoping for a close encounter with Buffy The Vampire Slayer any time soon, you could try hanging around in customised vampire fangs from *www.teethbydnash.com*. They match your teeth exactly and just slot over your canines for that authentic just-stepped-out-of-your-coffin look. Choose from traditional vampire incisors or some natty longer wolf fangs.

Dentanurse

dnausers.d-n-a.net/dnetQUQA/dentanurse ★★

Developed by NASA for astronauts who might be literally a million miles from the nearest dentist, this nifty kit allows amateurs to do a temporary repair job on teeth damaged in accidents, lost fillings or crowns. It contains a probe, spatula and mirror as well as filling material and instructions, and is a godsend for travellers to remote areas. The kit lasts for five years and costs £13.50.

BEST HEALTH SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

GET AN ONLINE DIAGNOSIS?

www.intelihealth.com A full and frank site to help solve problems.
www.mayo.edu Confess your fears.
www.quackwatch.com Shows how to heal naturally.

LOSE SOME WEIGHT?

uk.weightwatchers.com Find out how to shed extra pounds.
www.3fatchicks.com Recipes and nutritional information.
www.healthyideas.com Rate your present exercise regime...

LEARN ABOUT PREGNANCY?

www.motherandbaby.co.uk Watch a video of a water birth – yes really
www.thebabyregistry.co.uk Share tips and advice with other mothers.

FIND AN OFFICIAL HEALTH SITE?

www.doh.gov.uk/nhsexec/direct.htm How to get help via NHS Direct.
www.bma.org.uk Info on how to become a doctor.
www.dental health.org.uk Dentistry queries answered online.

TRY AN ALTERNATIVE?

www.altguide.com Find an alternative therapist.
www.homeopathyhome.com A search engine, a library, chat...
www.evonline.net Yoga questions answered.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

sci.med.dentistry Discuss the ins-and-outs of dentistry.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Get on the healing and meditation list at ***www.harmonyland.com/healing_net_mailing_list.htm*** and get better naturally.

GET CHATTING?

www.docsonline.com Proper, qualified physicians on hand to answer your medical questions in a chat room. Nice.

Hey, big spender!

Which Web card should you trust with your cash?

Marbles

www.marbles.com/html/find_securityfset.html ★★★

Following a massive advertising campaign, Marbles must be the highest profile Internet credit card in the UK. They guarantee to give you a 100 percent refund if you're stitched-up online. Smile, Egg, and the less friendly-sounding Royal Bank of Scotland have all been quick to follow suit. Check out the Marbles 'Safe Shopping Promise'.

Egg

www1.egg.com/ecard/guarantee/guarantee.asp ★★★

Some reports suggest online credit card fraud is running as high as 30 percent of all transactions, compared with only one percent in the high street. But as Egg says: that's not your problem. If you have an Egg card, the man from the Pru will give you your money back if things go pear-shaped. Still not convinced? Follow the link to the Office of Fair Trading's e-commerce page.

Electronic Communications Act

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldbills/067/2000067.htm ★★★★

Last year Net shopping grew by a healthy 150 percent to around $12 billion world-wide, but there's plenty of room for improvement. Latest research shows that 65 percent of Internet users are still afraid to buy stuff online, whilst less than three per cent of browsers at online stores actually buy anything. But netizens of Blair's brave new Britain need fear the Web no longer: digital signatures are now legally binding thanks to the Electronic Communications Bill which has just received Royal Assent. Mug up on it here.

SETco – Secure Electronic Transaction

www.setco.org ★★★

SETco, the electronic payment-security organisation funded by Visa International and MasterCard, have developed this work-a-day site to tell you everything you want to know – and lots you probably don't – about international efforts to encourage you to part with your readies over the Internet. Credit-card companies who sign up to SET will give each of their cardholders an electronic signature to install on their computers, and in return e-shops will prove they are who they say they are using digital certificates. Find out how to get a SET card and which shops are signed up to the scheme in the handy links section.

Elton was pleased with his £600m credit limit

PICK OF THE NET

Visa Internet Shopping

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

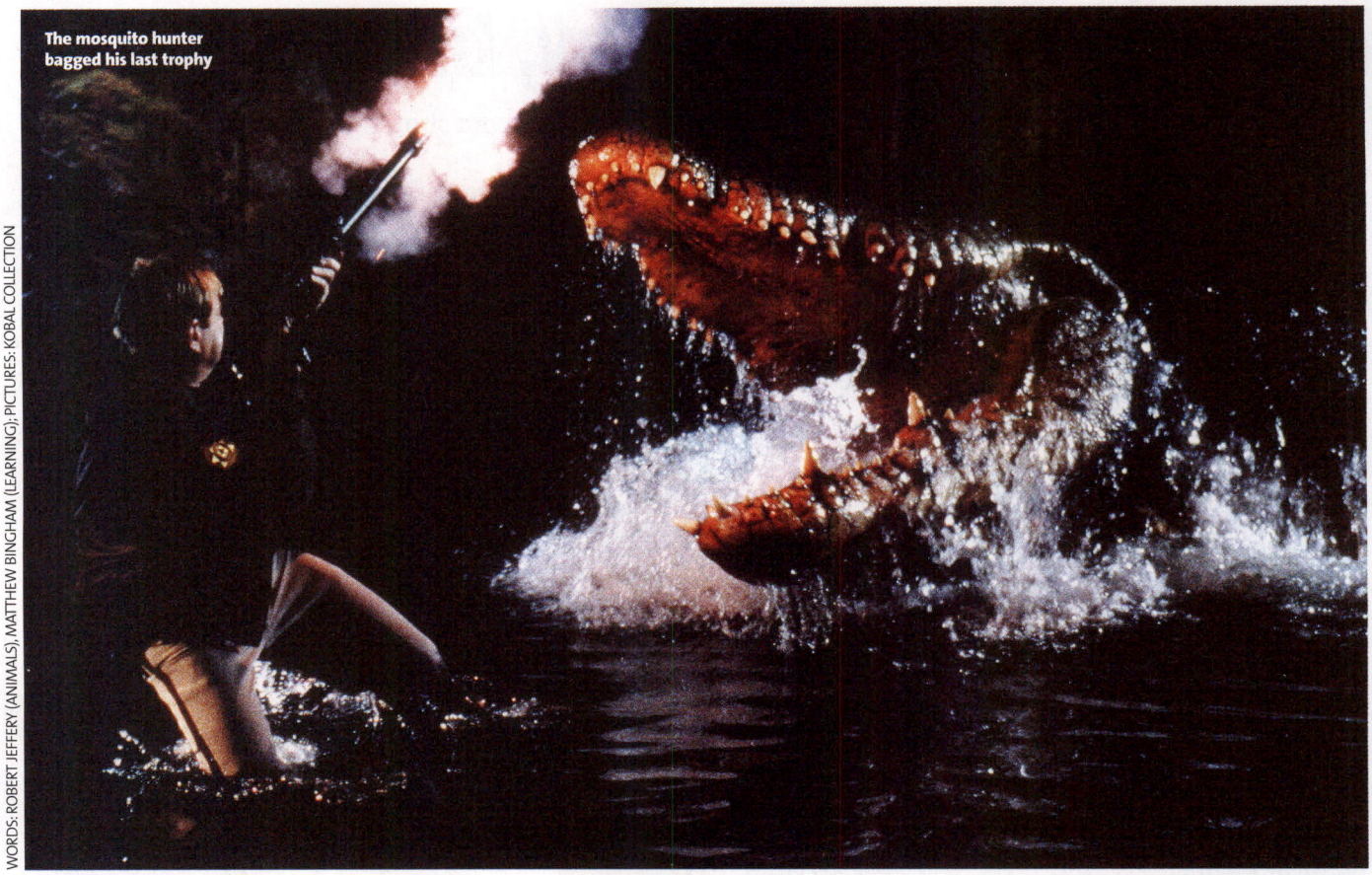
www.visa.com/nt/ecomm/security/main.html ★★★★★

An excellent introduction to Net shopping for newbies – there's even a step-by-step demo of how to use your credit card online, and a blow-by-blow explanation of why you've got nothing to worry about if you use your smarts. This is one of the most comprehensive sites on e-commerce around, written for normal folk rather than those with an unhealthy interest in 128-bit cryptography. A clever move by Visa, who obviously have a vested interest in getting you into debt while you surf.

For more money sites, turn to Need To Know on page 113

WORDS: CHRIS HADLEY; PICTURES: PA

KILLER ANIMALS



The mosquito hunter bagged his last trophy

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY (ANIMALS), MATTHEW BINGHAM (LEARNING); PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

Nature's killers

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water...

Piranha Hut

members.aol.com/piranhahut ★★★

First, the bad news. A group of hungry piranhas can devour an entire cow in a matter of minutes, so your frantic, splashing torso won't be much of a challenge – but, fortunately, 'they shouldn't be feared unless you are in the water with them and you have an open wound'. Piranha Hut caters for both the fan of the mini-assassin and the potential piranha keeper (though the easily-scared might want to steer well clear of the videos section).

Sharks, Predators Of The Deep

www.casema.net/~jkoetze ★★★

The humble shark has always had something of a bad press, but as this ample site points out, he's a 'complex and misunderstood' creature who rarely kills humans and is statistically less dangerous than the average family dog. The database of attack figures will debunk a few myths, while the 'knowledge base' tells you everything you ever wanted to know about the razor-toothed monsters. All that, and no mention of Roy Schneider anywhere.

Tarantulas

www.nationalgeographic.com/tarantulas ★★★★

Though nowhere near as deadly as the Black Widow (or the unnecessarily scary Hobo Spider, which comes with a total of eight eyes), popular myth has promoted the tarantula to the dizzy heights of 'scariest arachnid'. *National Geographic*'s homage to the eight-legged horror is delightful: an interactive trip inside a tarantula's nest, complete with details of its mating habits, eating patterns and life cycle. Not for those who hid behind the sofa during *Arachnaphobia*.

Africanized Honey Bees

agnews.tamu.edu/bees ★★★

Little buggers, these. Your average bee is a fairly docile creature who'll attack only when threatened; but these lunatic cousins – common in South America and now spreading into southern US states – will happily converge on you, swarm-like, if you get in their way. Indeed, several deaths have already been

BEST ANIMALS SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

HELP WITH ANIMAL RIGHTS?

www.rspca.org.uk Those people who care for neglected animals.

www.animalaid.org.uk The online home of the animal rights group.

LEARN ABOUT MY PET'S BEHAVIOUR?

www.healthypet.com Info about pet health and behaviour.

www.pethelp.net This site claims to help you understand your pet.

BUY PET SUPPLIES?

www.petplanet.co.uk Kit your pet out with toys and accessories.

www.pet-pyjamas.co.uk Home to some of the weirdest pet merchandise you could hope to find.

VISIT ONLINE ZOOS?

www.howletts.net Take a virtual tour round this wildlife park.

www.si.edu/natzoo An easy-to-use and humourous site that is perfect for kids.

LEARN HOW TO CARE FOR MY PET?

www.avma.org/care4pets Get some excellent tips and advice from American vets.

www.rabbit.org/faq A whole heap of rabbit care advice, including diet and toys.

Equip your pet with the latest gadgets at petplanet.co.uk

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.pets.reptiles.snakes Find fellow reptile fans through the Web.

GET CHATTING?

www.sharkfriends.com Adopt a shark, then discuss its progress with various fellow surrogate parents.

attributed to them in Texas. Oh, and don't think of legging it either – they will follow you, and they fly faster than you can run.

Crocodiles

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/crocs
★★★★

While less dangerous than, say, the piranha (due to its easy visibility), the croc is nonetheless a fearsome beast. With a sprinting speed of a whopping 43mph and jaws large enough to paralyse instantly, swimming near one isn't advisable. Fortunately, this site tells you exactly how to overpower and capture a hungry croc. So that's OK, then...

Hippo World

members.aol.com/HippoPage
★★★★★

Ah, the hippo. A sweet, mud-dwelling mammal, if slightly grotesque. No danger to man nor beast, surely? As Hippo World puts it, they 'only want to be left alone'. Wrong. The hippo is, in fact, a savage killer widely thought to be responsible for more human deaths than any other type of creature. With a top weight of five tons and a cruising speed of 20mph, you certainly don't want to get one mad.

PICK OF THE NET

Snake.org

www.thesnake.org ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

While largely repellent to most of us, the humble snake will always hold a strange fascination for those on society's fringes. People like Alice Cooper. Fortunately, Snake.org panders to those with a healthy zoological interest in our scaly friends as well as those who just want to see pictures of little mice being devoured. Discover which snakes are the deadliest, how to deal with bites and which to keep as pets, or simply peruse the massive links archive to all manner of dangerous creatures. If Slash wanted to replenish his post-Guns n' Roses Snakepit, this is place he'd come to.

DISTANCE LEARNING

Learn from your bedroom

Avoid campuses of long-haired wasters with the Net

Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning

www.tall.ox.ac.uk ★★★★

No degrees on offer yet, but enrol in this Internet-based project and you could walk away with a genuine Oxford University undergraduate diploma (one year's study) or a two-year certificate. Courses on offer are computing, local history and immunology, and you'll pick up your course material, meet fellow e-students and submit work over the Web. Could this be the future of higher education?

Swindon VCampus

www.swindon-college.ac.uk/vcampus
★★★

Swindon College has tied up with various US institutions to offer dozens of Web-based tutorials, ranging from psychology to bookkeeping. Study in your own time, take tests online, hang out in the virtual common room and – perhaps best of all – never have to set foot in the town of Swindon.

Eloquence

www.elok.com ★★★★

No qualifications on offer here; just the satisfaction of being able to order a drink in French, German, Spanish or Italian. These language courses employ streaming video and online databases, and will even find you a penpal so you can try your hand at letter-writing. Quite what they can do about your pronunciation, however, is a mystery.

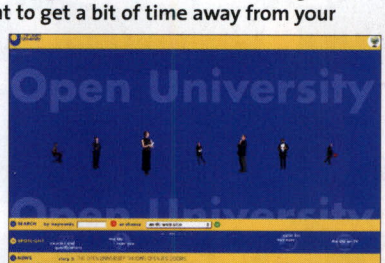
PICK OF THE NET

The Open University

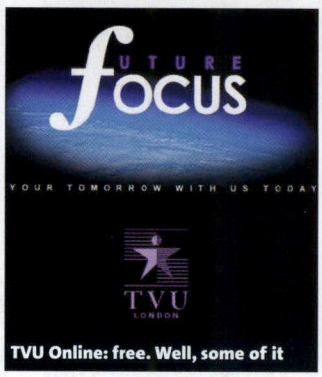
www.open.ac.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The colossus of distance learning might be slow to put its teachings online but the OU's Web site is still a fine achievement, detailing hundreds of courses to degree level and beyond. If you want to get a bit of time away from your computer as you study, use the Open's more traditional teaching materials – such as kipper-tied physics professors broadcasting in the small hours. And if you still can't find what you want, search the humungous International Centre for Distance Learning database at *www-icdl.open.ac.uk*.



Learn to float at open.ac.uk



TVU Online: free. Well, some of it

TVU Online

www.tvu.ac.uk/courses/content/online/online.html ★★★★

Thames Valley University offers three online courses: Future Focus (a bunch of IT and business skills), ICT4LT (Information and Communication Technology for Language Teachers) and IDEAL (new media design for small businesses and freelances). The latter is offered free to eligible candidates – see the Web site for further information.

Seminars in excessive hair growth were sombre affairs

For more learning sites, turn to page 113

On sale Wed 2 August

2000–2001 Season Preview issue
104 clubs reviewed. All the facts and figures.
Plus get £1 off the October issue *

*See inside the September issue for details. Orders must arrive on or before 16 August 2000

Postbox of champions

The boss thinks you're busy answering emails – but really you're playing more sports than Daley Thompson

In Off The Post

www.iotp-online.co.uk ★★★★★

You have two choices at In Off The Post: play online or by snail-mail. No prizes for guessing which we prefer. You can play English or Elite leagues, the latter involving the best teams from around the world, including, er, Sheffield Wednesday. Each turn is 10 days, and you need to pick the team, sort finances – all on an online turn-sheet. At £35 for a Premiership season, it's reasonable too.

The World Correspondence Chess Federation

www.geocities.com/radale/wccf ★★★

If ever a game was perfect for email it's chess. Sports and games come and go, but this elegant, thoughtful game will be with us forever, constantly adapting to and using new technology. This site plays host to a large number of events, and you can sign up for as many as you like. You get 30 days to make 10 moves; I think even we can manage that.

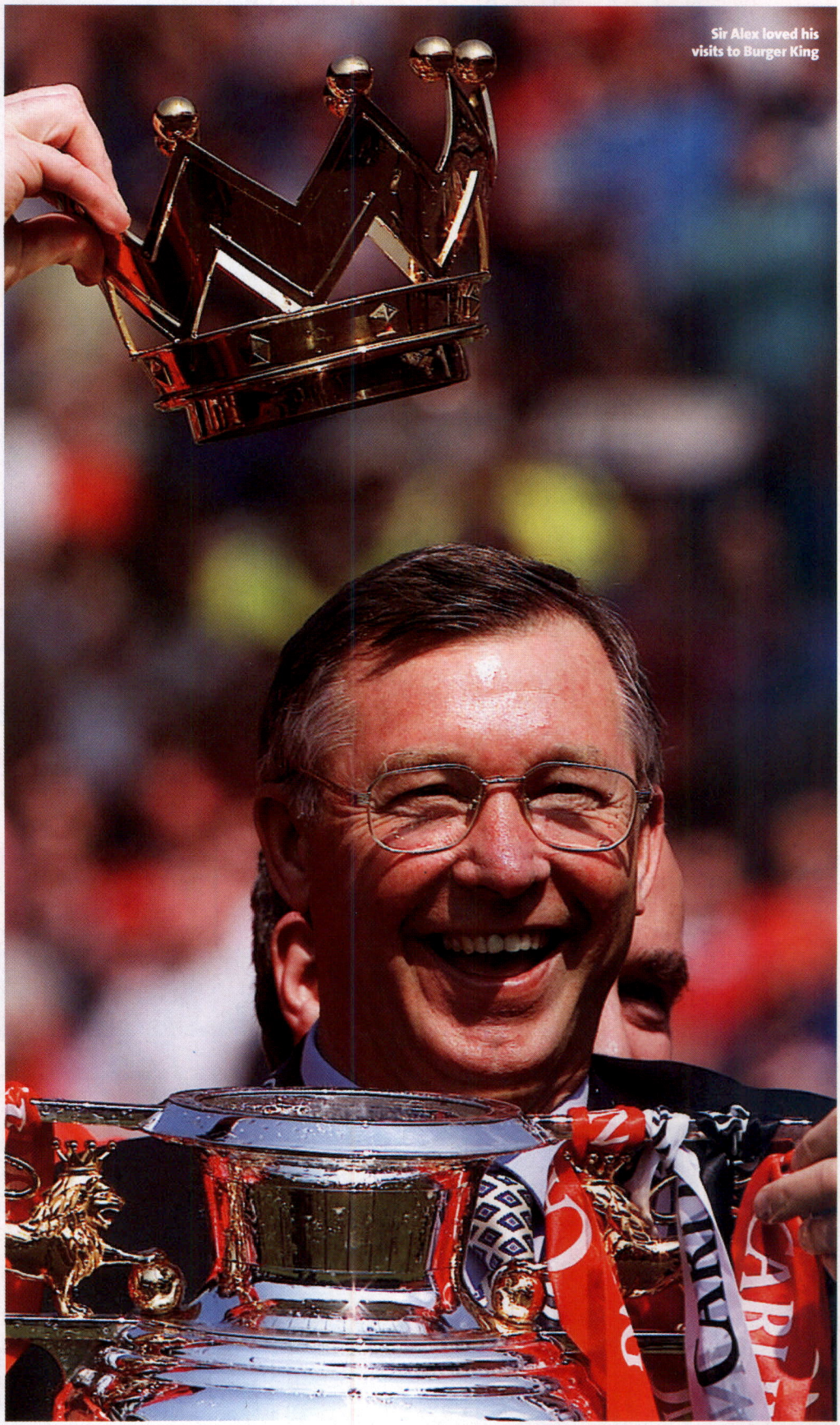
Elegance personified at the WCCF

Supreme Mountain E-Wrestling

www.geckofrog.com/smw2000/index2.shtml ★★★

Online wrestling? Oh yes! The WWF has obviously made a big impact on the WWW judging by the number of sites dedicated to it. Here, you role-play as a wrestler, challenging opponents before sending in your canvas-slapping, ring-jumping, crowd-bating moves to a writer, who decides who wins the bout. You can even send in a sneak attack before the big event. See page 88 for more examples...

In Off The Post involves the best teams in the world – like, er, Sheffield Weds



Sir Alex loved his visits to Burger King

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN; PICTURES: PA

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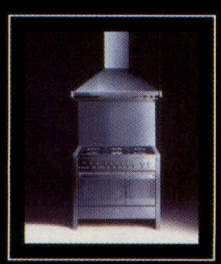
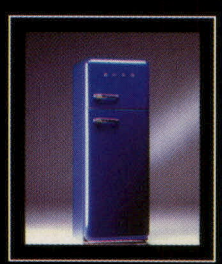


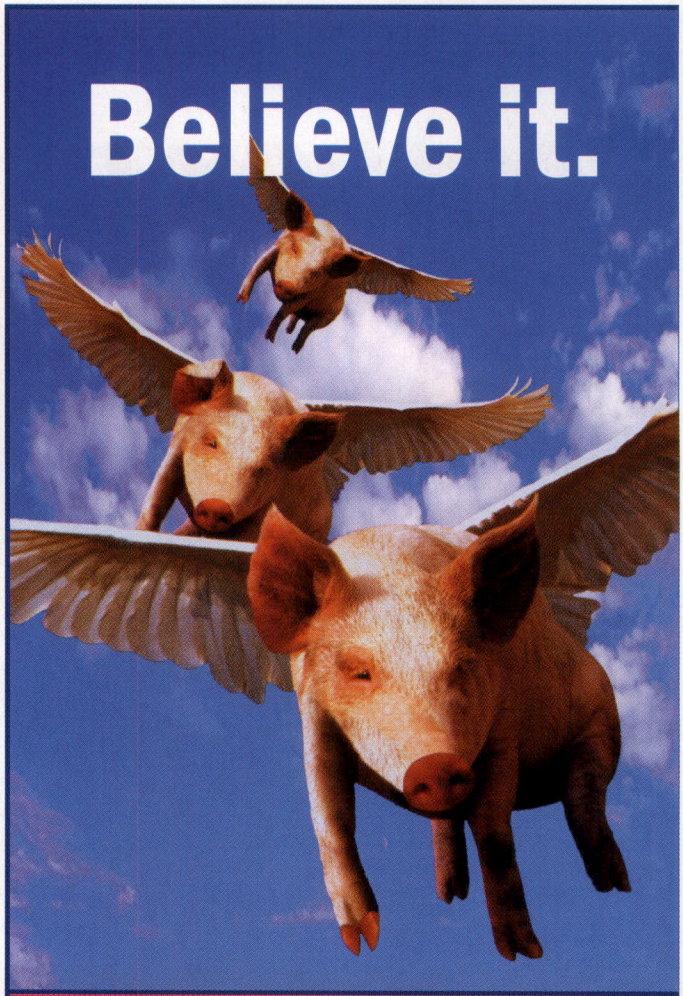


http://smeg-appliances.com

WELCOME TO TOMORROW

http://we-sell-it.co.uk

QUALITY • SERVICE



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**begin with bronze package

www.bluegenesis.co.uk

'That look'll never go out of fashion, Mr Allison'

PICK OF THE NET

PureFootball

www.freeloader.com/purefootball

★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

A stylish online footie management game that's fun and free to play! No, we didn't believe it either, but those wacky folks at Freeloader have done just that. You pick a team of players whose values and career paths reflect those real-life, overpaid oiks we watch every week in the Premiership. Not only is it free, but you can win cash prizes as well – but only if you're good enough, mind. The site also plays host to a range of other free downloadable games, the majority of which are well worth the time of day.

BEST GAMES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

PLAY GAMES ONLINE?

www.shockwave.com
Shocked games and cartoons.
www.gameplay.com
Britain's biggest online gaming site.
www.gameszone.com
Free service covering all of Europe.
www.freeloader.com
Play the latest titles for free.

BUY GAMES?

www.gamesstreet.infront.co.uk
Excellent deals on a range of games.
www.chipsworld.co.uk
Everything you need for consoles.
www.game-retail.co.uk
The shop of the High Street store.

FIND DEMOS?

www.happypuppy.com
Find new demos and shareware games here.
www.gameaddict.net
Demos and reviews for PC games.
www.3dfiles.com
Demos and shareware downloads.
www.acdownload.com
Plenty of great downloads.

FIND GAMING NEWS?

www.gamesdomain.co.uk
News and game-related features.
www.gamedaily.com
All the latest news on this busy site.
www.ign.com
Thorough worldwide games news.
www.bluesnews.com
In-depth articles and features.

PLAY TRADITIONAL GAMES?

games.yahoo.com
Card games, board games and much more.

Shop away: gamesstreet.infront.co.uk

www.bignetwork.com
A collection of classic gaming tournaments.
www.pogo.com
Both traditional and arcade games.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.games.cheats
Got a hot tip? Share it here...

GET CHATTING?

www.alienmoon.com
Chat and cheats for PlayStation and PC.

The Play By Mail Homepage

www.pbm.com/~lindahl/pbm.html

★★★

If the idea of playing sport by mail – snail or e- variety – grabs you, but you're not sure where to start then this guide is as good place as any. It introduces you to the world of turn-based gaming and details the different types of games, as well as providing hints, tips and guides to etiquette and procedure. There are links to all the games, too.

World Basketball League

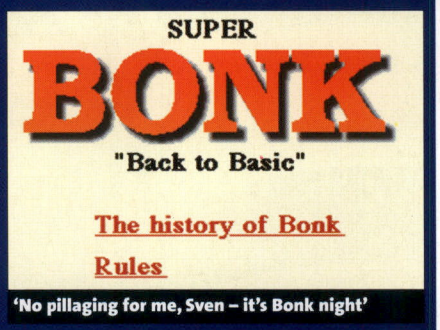
members.tripod.com/hicks1210/index.htm ★★★★

Forget the overpaid, lanky giants of the National Basketball Association, the World Basketball League puts you in control, no matter how short, fat and generally unathletic you are. You can sign up at the site, and then play using the purpose-built statistic-driven program. The Web site is full of the stats, facts and ▶

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

'BACK TO YOUR HOMEWORK, TIMOTHY'

A trawl through the underbelly of online gaming – no expensive graphics cards, connection speeds or ping rates to worry about with these beauties – will sadden games fans who recall formerly popular email sports which have since mysteriously disappeared. Apart from the host of wrestling games that have gone the way of televised snooker ratings, it's particularly painful to witness the shutting down of Timothy's Cricket League; closed down because of study pressure. One game that does not want to be revived though is Bonk, an email game with a dubious Viking heritage. It's not running at the moment, but the Webmaster is open to offers: *www.ida.liu.se/~x99janca/Bonk/index.html*



'No pillaging for me, Sven – it's Bonk night'

Don King: bouffant

figures that define American sports, and keep ex-players in blue blazers and hair dye for years.

Boxing Game

www.boxinggame.com ★★★★

'Boxing Game' – the name is as simple as the sport. You simply train your boxers and set them on the rough road to glory. All the thrill of getting in the ring and beating the living daylights out of some poor sap, but without the pain, disfigurement and embarrassment of learning how to skip. You have to pay to play, but it's cheap and you can win cash prizes.

Cricket Games

www.cricketgames.com ★★★★

The homepage of online cricket games, with a host of white-trousered, summer picnic simulations to choose from. The one we tried was based on real players' one-day stats. Pitch two international teams against each other, select batting and bowling orders and watch the tallies grow. It's realistic, too; no matter who we pitched England against, they lost.

Very realistic: cricketgames.com

One-On-One Basketball

basketball-game.com ★★★

In an interesting twist on online and turn-based gaming, this one-on-one basketball game mixes the two. The league is run from here, and after you've set up a player you arrange to compete against other players or enter the league. The game is then played – by the host's computer – with full match stats and commentary available every Saturday night.

Drac's Games

www.madasafish.com/~dracsgames ★★★★

Just as you can play basketball via email if you're five-foot-one, so you can race horses over courses if you're seven-foot-two. This site runs four email racing games, and you race your horses in them. Email turn-around is around a week, during which time you have to deal with training and choosing the horse to run in the Grand National.

They're giving them away!

Upgrade or end up with a glorified abacus – the best places to buy a new computer online

Buy.com

www.gb.buy.com ★★★

The buy.com URL has got to be one of the 10 most valuable in the world – and the mail-order company that own it aren't putting it to waste. This localised UK version of buy.com isn't the most comprehensive around, but there are some good deals, especially on things like consumables (blank CDs etc). The simple design is backed up by facilities like order tracking.

Dabs

www.dabs.co.uk ★★★★

The shining face of corporate hardware purchases – but also the first place to look for bargains if you're a home user. The design's confusing but bypass the front-end, enter a search phrase ('CPU', for instance) and you're off and running. It's always kept very up-to-date (stock quantities are listed next to each item), and they'll even deliver it free if you book via the Web site.

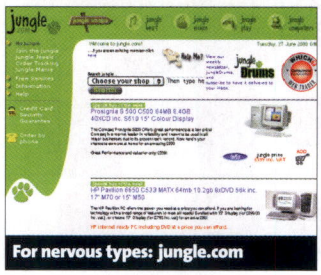
Jungle.com

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.jungle.com ★★★★★

Proof positive that it's possible to combine a clear brand with a good interface, a large catalogue and plenty of bargains – Jungle's the way forward for mail order. If you're looking for a particular item, then the excellent search engine will enable you to zero in quickly on what you want. Once you've got the results on screen you can rank

...and that of course includes free delivery



For nervous types: jungle.com

them according to popularity, price, description or manufacturer – neat touch that. Good information is supplied regarding the availability of all products and like Dabs, they'll deliver it free if you order over the Internet. Nervous online shoppers will also like the credit card security guarantee. Excellent.

LetsBuyIt

www.letsbuyit.com ★★★★

Great concept this – bring the power of bulk purchasing to the masses and cut out the middlemen in the high street. The 'Computer' section of the site doesn't offer a comprehensive range, but what is there is very cheap. Always worth checking before you splash out on a new gizmo for your PC: you could easily save yourself a packet.

Overclockers

www.overclockers.co.uk ★★★★

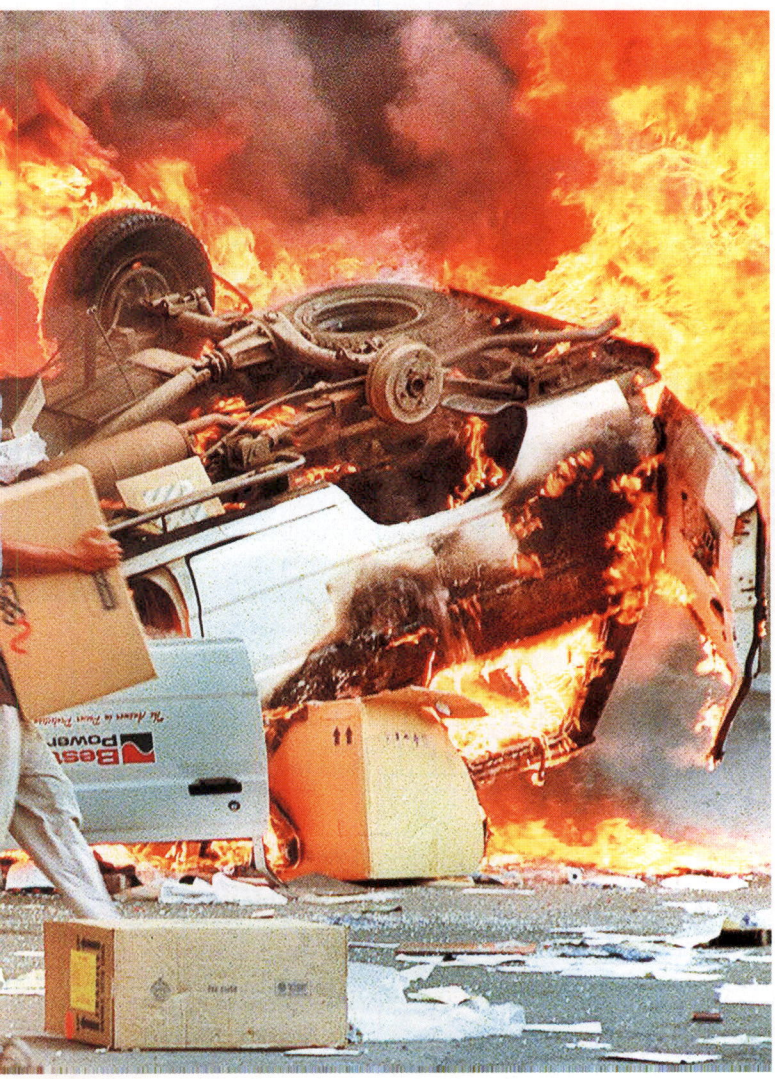
Not just a site for the kind of nutters that fit liquid cooling systems on their CPUs, Overclockers is a great spot for bargain-hunters. CPUs, memory, hard drives and all manner of widgets are located here with prices to suit all pockets. Pleasingly laid out, Overclockers (unlike some sites that are mere catalogues) includes full online shopping facilities.

Powastore

www.powastore.com ★★★

One of the newer shopping sites, Powastore doesn't offer a particularly comprehensive range, but prices are reasonable. We liked the special bargains listed on the main page; and another neat feature here is the 'best selling' list on the main page.

Prices are more important than design, but it's possible to combine the two



BEST COMPUTER SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND HOT SHAREWARE?

tucows.cableinet.net Odd name, but a great collection of shareware.
filepile.com Use the superb search engine on over one million files.

GET THE FINAL WORD?

www.cnet.com 'The center of the digital universe': everything that a Net user could need.
www.zdnet.co.uk Another computing supersite, this time with a specific UK slant.

GET HELP AND ADVICE?

www.mydesktop.com Excellent computer news and features, plus tech support.
www.ask-a-tech.org 'Helping you help yourself'; allows you to submit specific questions.

FIND USER GROUPS?

www.wugnet.com Resource centre for shareware, support, tips and a whole lot more.
www.lmug.org.uk Enthusiastic Mac user group. Good for beer and software tips.

BUY HARD- & SOFTWARE?

www.pcworld.co.uk Offering several different stores for software and even furniture.
www.software-warehouse.co.uk Software heaven: everything you need from a wide range of makers.

GET STUFF FOR MAC USERS?

www.flashpaper.com/umac This is called The Ultimate Macintosh: go there and you'll find out why.
www.webintosh.com Excellent systems, software and peripherals newsletter.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

uk.comp.misc Covers a wider range of topics than most computer newsgroups.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

For A-Computer-World, a discussion on all things computer-related, go to ***www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi***, search for 'A-Computer-World' and type in your email address.

GET CHATTING?

chat.zdnet.com Big and colourful US-based chat site geared towards tech-talk in an accessible fashion. ZD Net also hosts chats with celebrities on a regular basis.

Get the computer news customised to suit your needs at mydesktop.com

PriceWatch

www.pricewatch.co.uk ★★★★

If your eyes glaze over as you pore over the tiny print in those massive computer adverts at the back of magazines, then you're going to love this site. Pricewatch does all the comparisons for you – pick a section (such as Monitors) and see price comparison for the same models from different stores. Simple, elegant and effective.

Lost: one man and his toy

Simply

www.simply.co.uk ★★

Probably Dab's biggest competitor, Simply are a traditional mail-order company who seem to have hopped onto the Internet because everyone else has. Their site resembles one big list of kit – there might be some bargains but you'll have lost interest long before you find the right section. OK, prices are more important than design, but surely it's possible to combine the two.

WORDS: ANDY HUTCHINSON; PICTURES: PA

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  Thousands of the best Web sites reviewed
- **Great features**
  Change your look, plan a wedding... it's all online-and we show you where
- **Bright Sparks**
  Tomorrow's Web stars in all their glory
- **Web Icons**
  The personalities and sites standing god-like astride the Net
- **Step-by-step**
  The pain-free guide to getting the best from the Web
- **Hardware**
  Flat-panel monitors, gaming gear, MP3 players...
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  Our experts test the UK's biggest ISPs every month
- **Retail Therapy**
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'I can't see a darn thing in these'

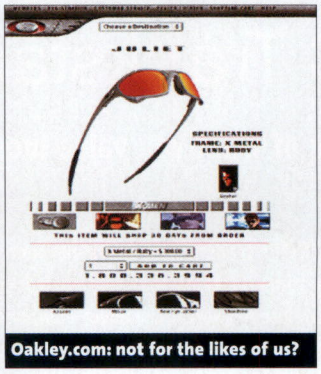
The sun's out (well, almost), so look your best...

Ray-Ban Sunglasses
thenet AWARD
www.rayban.com
★★★★★

The best thing on this site is the Ray-Ban virtual previewer. Simply send in or upload a picture of yourself, and you can try on the range of Ray-Bans to see exactly what you'll look like. Unfortunately, you can't shop online in the UK and the Dealer Locater doesn't stretch to this side of the pond – could someone please tell them there are other countries on the planet?

Oakley
www.oakley.com ★★★

Admittedly, Brits are not professional sunglasses wearers in the way that the Aussies and Yanks are, but again you would have thought Oakley could extend their online sales to the rest of the English-spoeaking world. At least the Store Locater covers good old Blighty.



Oakley.com: not for the likes of us?

Salcombe Offshore Spectacles
www.designer-sunglasses.co.uk
★★★

Ignore the pretty awful looking site – this place delivers a range of designer sunglasses to anywhere in the UK without a postal charge. There's a range of top names such as Diesel, Calvin Klein and Gucci to choose from and if the crap product pictures on the site aren't enough, browse the manufacturer's home page before you buy.

Bolle
www.bolle.com ★★★

It seems like you can't play sport any more unless you've got a cool pair of glasses on. Athletes wear them on the track, Steven Redgrave rows his boat in them and Dutch footballer Edgar Davids even wears them on the pitch, although he does have a medical reason. If you decide you can't set foot on the track without shades, this is a good place to start.

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW (STYLE), ROBERT JEFFERY (COMEDY); PICTURES: REX, PA

Gottle of geer!

The ancient art of ventriloquism lives on. Sadly

Amazing Puppets
www.amazingpuppets.com ★★★★

'I call my little friend Willie,' says Pauline Flowers of Anderson, Indiana. 'It was so cute to see the reactions of the grandchildren.' Before social services hotfoot it to the Anderson household, it's worth noting that 'Willie' is a ventriloquist's dummy. Will you opt for the $400 Knee Buddy or the $89 Happi-Hand Puppet? Decisions, decisions...

International Ventriloquists Association
www.inquisita.com ★★★

Proof, if proof were needed, that ventriloquism is alive and kicking in the year 2000. The IVA boasts hundreds of members and holds an annual convention in Las Vegas. Find the latest dummy news here, or peruse the micro-sites dedicated to some of the greats.

On A Stick: The World Of Jeff Dunham
www.ventriloquist.com ★★★★

Just about the best-known ventriloquist on the planet, Dunham's repertoire includes such characters as the permanently disgruntled pensioner Walter. You'll find plenty to watch, but avoid the biography – even in showbiz, describing yourself as 'handsome' is taking self-promotion a bit far.

Jeff Dunham: 'handsome'

The Brad Cummings And Rex Home Page
www.onebadegg.com ★★★

If you're still mourning the sad retirement of Keith Harris and Orville, comfort yourself with the 'hilarious' antics of Cummings and his pal Rex. And perusing the gags here, it's not difficult to see why audiences are, apparently, splitting their sides at the chucklesome pair.

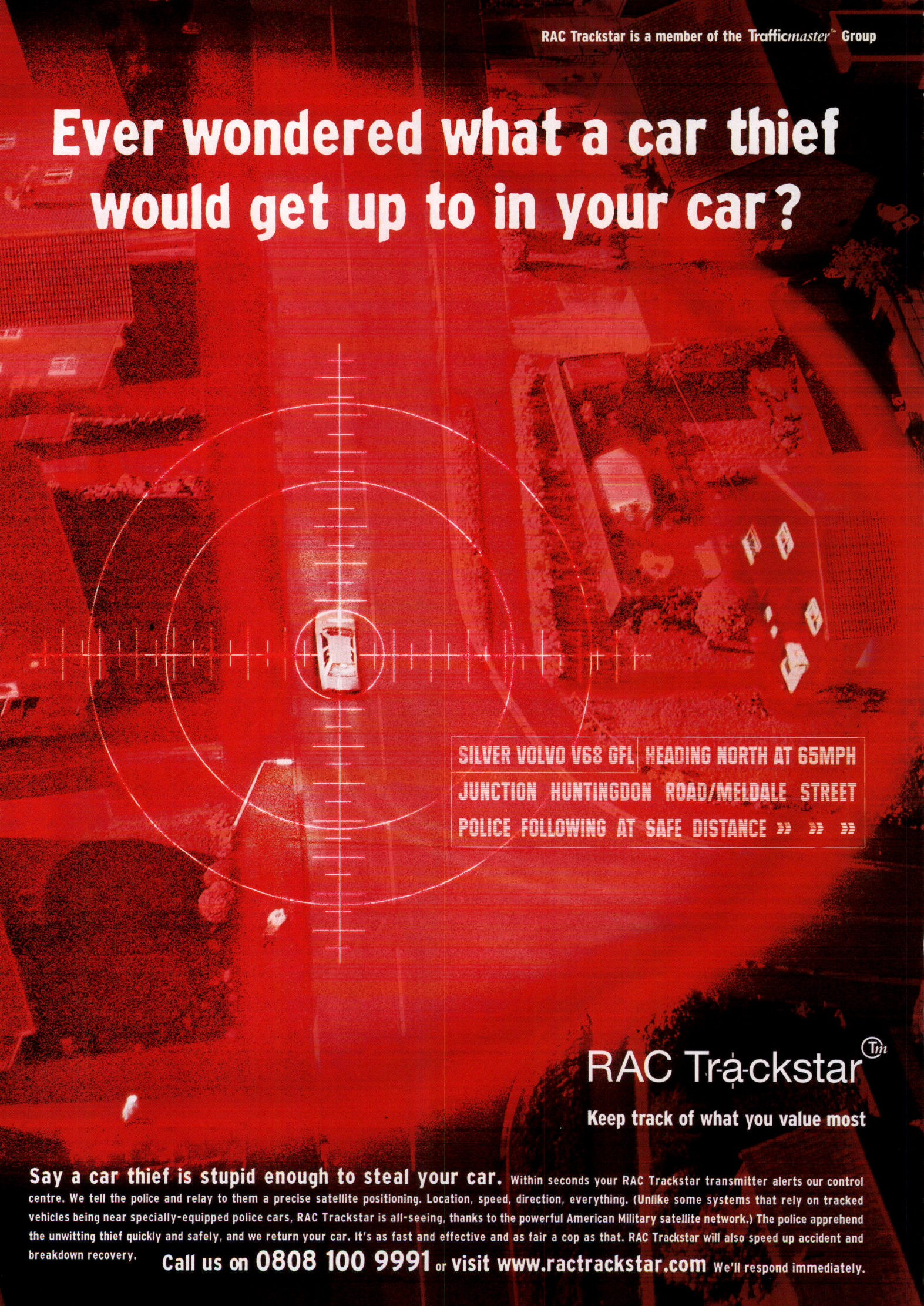
A tatty, lifeless puppet – and Nookie Bear

PICK OF THE NET

VentriloQuick
www.axtell.com/vent.html ★★★★★

thenet AWARD

Good ventriloquism isn't just a matter of closing your lips and mumbling incoherently while inserting your hand into a latex reptile. It's actually a precise art form which can take years to master – although this online course will have you venting away like an expert within ten minutes. Discover how to make puppets come to life in your hands! You won't be able to resist a quick show with the nearest stuffed toy.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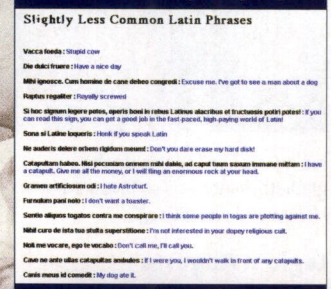
Call us on 0808 100 9991 or visit www.ractrackstar.com We'll respond immediately.

CUNNING LINGUISTICS

Et tu Brute?

Latin: the preserve of the upper classes and posh public schools? Well, no, because now the power of the dead language can be yours, thanks to the InterWeb! Simply visit the likes of Slightly Less Common Phrases (*www.porkpie.demon.co.uk/slighty.htm*) and you'll be taught useful stuff such as 'Let's all wear mood rings' (Anulos qui animum ostendunt omnes gestemus), 'My dog ate it' (Canis meus id comedit) and the perennial favourite 'Yes, that is a very large amount of corn' (Aio, quantitas magna frumentorum es). Go on, fac ut vivas.



What have the Romans ever done for us?

They built straight roads, invented central heating – and now they're online

Lacus Curtius: Into the Roman World

www.ukans.edu/history/index/europe/ancient_rome/E/Roman/home.html

★★★★★

If we were really sad we might make a joke that neither Rome nor this site were built in a day, but we're not, so we won't. However, Lacus Curtius is absolutely jam-packed with information on, well, the Roman World. The author has gathered complete Latin texts as well as their English translations, maps, and thousands of photos and articles on daily life, architecture, engineering, politics and religion. However, if that all sounds a little heavy, take a look at the photographic guides and tours around ancient sites. Satisfyingly comprehensive.

Ancient Rome Daily Life

members.aol.com/Donnclass/Romelife.html#THOMAS ★★

Ancient Rome seems to be on the agenda for every schoolchild, so send them here for homework help. This site is a great introduction to all things Roman, written in a clear, easy-to-understand format: find out what you'd have eaten for breakfast (plebs: bread and water, toffs: meat, fish, honey) and all about weddings, family life, houses, games, toys and public baths (which apparently were 'arranged rather like a very large mall, with bathing pools'). All excellent, but it might be best to avoid the historically-inaccurate *Thomas, Greatest Lawyer in all of Greece & The Newly Conquered Rome* section if you'd like to avoid major confusion.

Roman Gladiatorial Games

depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/gladiatr/index.htm ★★★★

What with all the hype surrounding the recent film, it's refreshing to find a well-researched and well-written site on the subject of gladiators (all courtesy of Prof Roger Dunkle, Brooklyn College). The site is packed full of facts as well as info on the amphitheatres where the gruesome entertainment took place, and a fascinating discussion of the culture that would accept a (frankly unfair) contest between man and beast. It's also the perfect place to discover whether the thumbs-up/thumbs-down gesture ▶

PICK OF THE NET

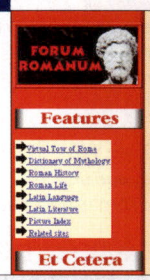
Forum Romanum

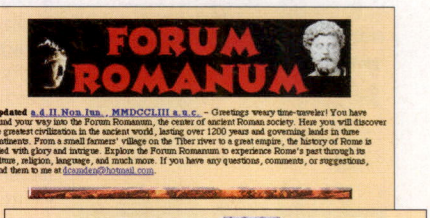
www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6946/rome.html

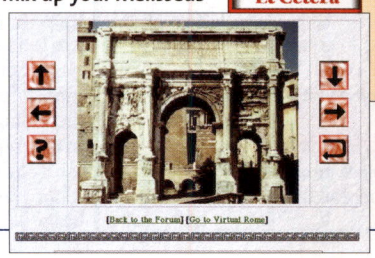
★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Whether you just want to know how togas were worn or you're looking for something more in-depth, Forum Romanum should suit. The virtual tour guides you around buildings, the dictionary will make sure you never mix up your Melisseus and your Meneptolemus, and you'll find out how many asses it takes to make a sestertius. And, did you know that the emperor Marcus Aurelius was addicted to opium? Thought not...







WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURE: KOBAL COLLECTION

ROMANS

Centurion Evans' unruly hair led to guard duties

really was used to decide the gladiator's fate – as so favoured by Hollywood directors.

Legio II Augusta

www.legiiavg.org.uk ★★★★

Aah, the great anachronisms of historical re-enactment: civil war soldiers queuing at the hamburger stall, Celts waiting for a portaloo... Thankfully, some re-enactors manage to get it just right: Legio II Augusta, who recreate Roman Britain, are well-known for their accuracy. Their Web presence is also informative with a look at Britain 2,000 years ago as well as weapons, book reviews and a discussion on the accuracy of *Gladiator*, as well as photos of their events. And if that's not enough, there's a great set of links as well as info on joining, if their shenanigans look like your idea of a perfect weekend.

Get renacting at legiiavg.org.uk

FORTUNE-TELLING

'No, sorry, England will never win a major sports event'

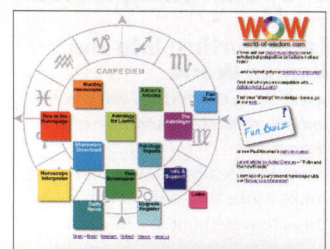
'I see a tall, dark stranger'

But then you knew that already, didn't you?

Jonathan Cainer's Zodiac Forecasts

www.cainer.com ★★★★

Jonathan Cainer, the megabuck-earning astrologer who now forecasts for the *Daily Express* (after an unseemly disagreement over crystal ball ownership with the *Daily Mail*), offers a comprehensive stargazing service here. Plan your day, week, year, whole life courtesy of Mr Cainer. Although no astrological prediction can be that accurate (considering each covers one-twelfth of the world's population), Mr Cainer does an impressive job of forecasting your general outlook.



Take a spin at world-of-wisdom.com

World of Wisdom

www.world-of-wisdom.com ★★★

This site's USP is the spin on world news – or the 'astrological perspective on today's hottest topic!' We visited on the day the human genetic code had been revealed but, according to the site, because Mercury began its retrograde period on 23 June this might cast some doubt on the smooth progress of the research subject. In addition to being the voice of doom, the site also contains monthly horoscopes and astrology for lovers – all colour co-ordinated for ease of use.

Mystic Meg Tarot

www.exam-ta.ac.uk/tarot.htm ★★

Mystic Meg, dry-ice specialist and crystal-ball gazer extraordinaire, has a surprisingly weak online presence – after all, this is the woman who had a prime-time spot on BBC TV pinpointing Lottery winners with uncanny inaccuracy. But she crops up at this very basic site, flogging a CD-ROM teaching you to read tarot cards – plus she will 'give you Cosmic Counsel'. Despite no longer popping

BEST HISTORY SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

RESEARCH BRITISH HISTORY?

www.thehistorychannel.co.uk
Resource guide and forum for British history.
www.great-britain.co.uk/history/history.htm
Like a huge textbook online; concise but fun – honest.

FIND OUT ABOUT WWII?

britaininworldwar2.future.easyspace.com Well-written nuggets on the 1939-45 conflict.
www.geocities.com/Pentagon/4143
The Battle of Britain is explored in detail here.

Antique advice at bbc.co.uk/antiques

VISIT AN ONLINE MUSEUM?

www.nhm.ac.uk
The wonders of the Natural History Museum online.
www.museums.co.uk
Comprehensive directory of museums.

BUY A BIT OF HISTORY?

www.bbc.co.uk/antiques
A huge guide to antiques from the Beeb, with online chat too.
www.qxl.com
Head for Hugh Scully's section.

RESEARCH THE MONARCHY?

www.royal.gov.uk
The official site, where Her Maj will answer all or any of your queries.
www.dcs.hull.ac.uk/public/genealogy/royal
Discover the Royal Family's history.

RESEARCH MY ANCESTORS?

www.pro.gov.uk
Public Records Office advice.
www.familysearch.com
Births, marriages and deaths in a searchable format.

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soc.history.ancient
Plenty of Roman discussion.

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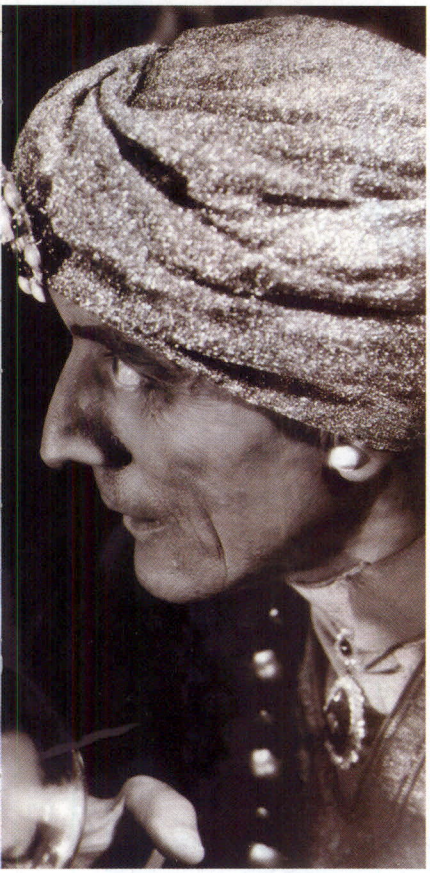
chat.genealogy.org
Family research in a chat room.



up on the National Lottery show, the woman who put the 'oooh' into 'spooky' still gives astrological guidance in the *News of the World*'s magazine – which, although not online yet, will be 'in the near future'. Oooh.

Chinese Astrology

www.chinese-astrology.com ★★★★

Are you a rat? Or maybe you're a bit of a dog. Well, regardless of what you look like, Chinese astrology groups you into one of 12 animal signs based on your year of birth as opposed to your month of birth. This simple-to-use site explains the theory and beliefs of Chinese astrology, and offers detailed, personalised consultations. And this site does seem to be *very* accurate – the birthdate used was in the sign of the monkey, which 'may have a bit of genius'. Too true.

Traditional Horary, Electional & Natal Astrology

www.horary.com ★★★★

A bit different to your usual 'Mars in the ascendant means it's a good day for money but bad for relationships' type of thing, this horary is a different bag of constellations altogether. Unusually for astrology, the date and time of your birth is not necessary to compile a chart for your future – the answers to questions are dependent on what is happening in your life at the time of asking (only $50 a pop) but be warned: no 'illegal or immoral' questions.

Russell Grant

www.russellgrant.co.uk ★★★

'Britain's most loved astrologer' (it says here) is the twinkling, roly-poly (it doesn't say) Russell Grant. The housewives' favourite dispenses celestial advice, courtesy of this twinkling little site – at a price. The choices range from an instant Psychic Reading to a personalised 30-day forecast, with or without a natal birth chart. And the curly-haired one has turned into a one-man industry, named Russell Grant Essentials, which contains a jaw-dropping range of merchandise from astro mousemats to a millennium bone china plate?

Supamystic

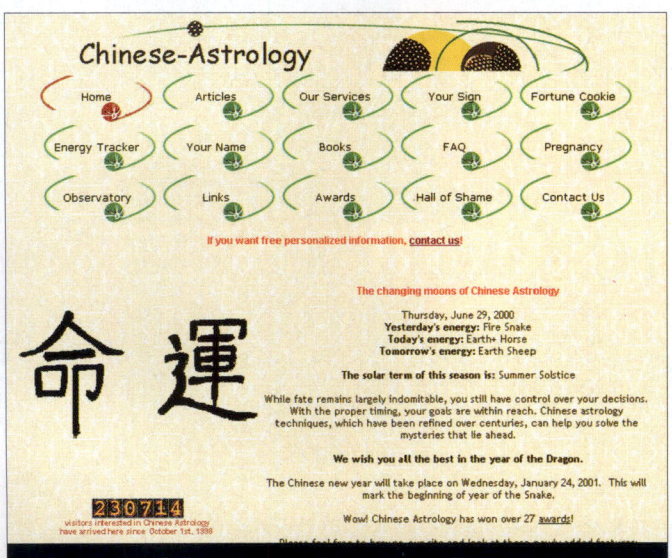
www.supanet.com/mystic ★★★★

Supamystic concerns itself with all things mystical, funnily enough. Though limited in subjects, what it does cover is done in great detail – the Dream Doctor section ('designed to educate you about the unconscious mind') answers questions emailed in, and has a comprehensive guide to the meaning of common dreams. Nicely designed and easy to use, the site also contains a hand analysis section where you can send in a scan of your mitts for interpretation. As of writing we were still waiting with bated breath for the verdict on our palms – which are no doubt laced with genius.

Panchang

www.panchang.com ★★★

A rather strange winking letter (which apparently represents enlightenment) greets you when you log on. But persevere and let the wonders of Panchang unfold – well, a personal lunar report and time planner. Panchang, ancient Indian astrology, takes its cue from the position of the moon – not the sun – and it tells you to work in harmony with time. Yeah, right.

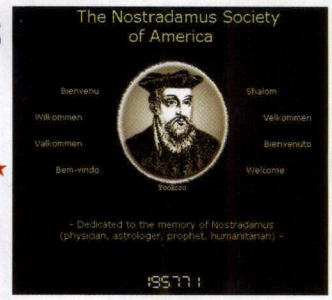


Monkey, rat, pig – find out the animal in you at www.chinese-astrology.com

PICK OF THE NET

Nostradamus Society of America

www.nostradamususa.com ★★★★★



thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The greatest fortune-teller of them all is the subject of this detailed and thorough site. Depending on your point of view, Nostradmus was either a great visionary... or greatly hyped. Writing in the early 16th Century, did he really foretell the French Revolution, the rise of Hitler and Napoleon, space travel and the Kennedy assassinations? Read his work here and decide for yourself whether 'Hister' was, indeed, Hitler. Way to go, Nozza.

BEST WEIRD SITES ★★★★★

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www.joeha.com/whiteboard A collection of those silly little stories to email your mates.
www.tabloid.net *National Enquirer*-style paper.
www.bbc.co.uk/weird The Beeb comes over all weird, with a haunted house and 'ghostcam'.
www.witchvox.com Discover the world of witchcraft and the paranormal – in detail.

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www.ufomag.co.uk *UFO Mag* offers lots of thought-provoking debate.
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www.foia.ucia.gov More grainy, indistinct documents from the US Government's vaults.

LEARN ABOUT CULTS?

cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/home.html Meet the maddest cults in the world here.
www.mayhem.net/crime/cults.html Dangerous cults go over the edge.
www.factnet.org Newsletter dedicated to tracking scary sects.
www.religioustolerance.org/destruct.htm Get the lowdown on potentially dangerous cults before joining.

FIND OUT ABOUT AREA 51?

www.ufomind.com/area51 A hefty resource on the secret base.
www.nauticom.net/users/ata/area51.html Excellent site that includes travel tips.
www.parascope.com/articles/1196/area1.htm Find a photograph of the infamous black mailbox here.

FIND A CONSPIRACY THEORY?

www.disinfo.com Conspiracies for the whole family.
www.4conspiracytheories.com A wealth of conspiratorial links in which to get lost
www.conspire.com Sceptical tales with tongue placed firmly in cheek.
www.larouchepub.com Very, very worrying indeed.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.astrology.moderated What do your stars have in store? be among the first to know.

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Join the generally weird list from ***www.integral.org/mailman/listinfo/generallyweird***

GET CHATTING?

www.scibernet.com/xfiles Drop in for regular chats with those who know the truth is out there.

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

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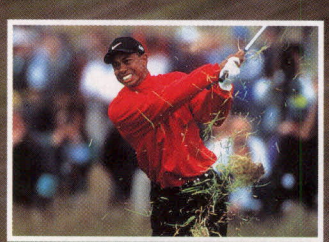

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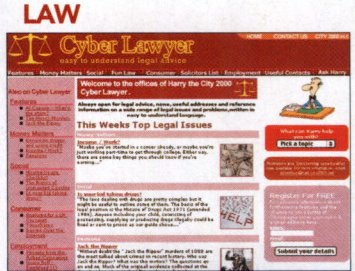
Club-Z ***www.club-z.com***
Disney ***www.disney.co.uk***
EduWeb ***www.eduweb.co.uk***
Family Education ***www.familyeducation.com***
BJ Pinchbeck Homework Helper ***www.bjpinchbeck.com***
Teen Advice ***www.teenadvice.net***
Teen Scene ***www.teen-scene.com***
Thunk ***www.thunk.com***
Yahooligans ***www.yahooligans.com***

LAW


CYBERLAWYER
cyberlawyer.city2000.com
Everyone wants to help with your legal affairs nowadays. This site offers news, free advice and a reference section with checklists for key legal issues.

Desktop Lawyer ***www.desktoplawyer.freeserve.net***
Divorce Online ***www.divorce-online.co.uk***
Law Rights ***www.lawright.co.uk***
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UK Law Online ***www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn***

MAGAZINES
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freedom for the net generation

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- no downtime
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- fast low cost domain name registration

We are faster, funkier and friendlier than your average ISP.

It's not just the the big mean red mutha fish (Red Dude to his pals) or the unforgettable name. **Madasafish?** We mean it.

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We know what you don't want from your ISP

You don't want downtime, engaged tones or a naff email address.

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Well?

do you want it or what?

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to get your free Madasafish install CD or visit

www.madasafish.com for fast online signup

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...or even faster?

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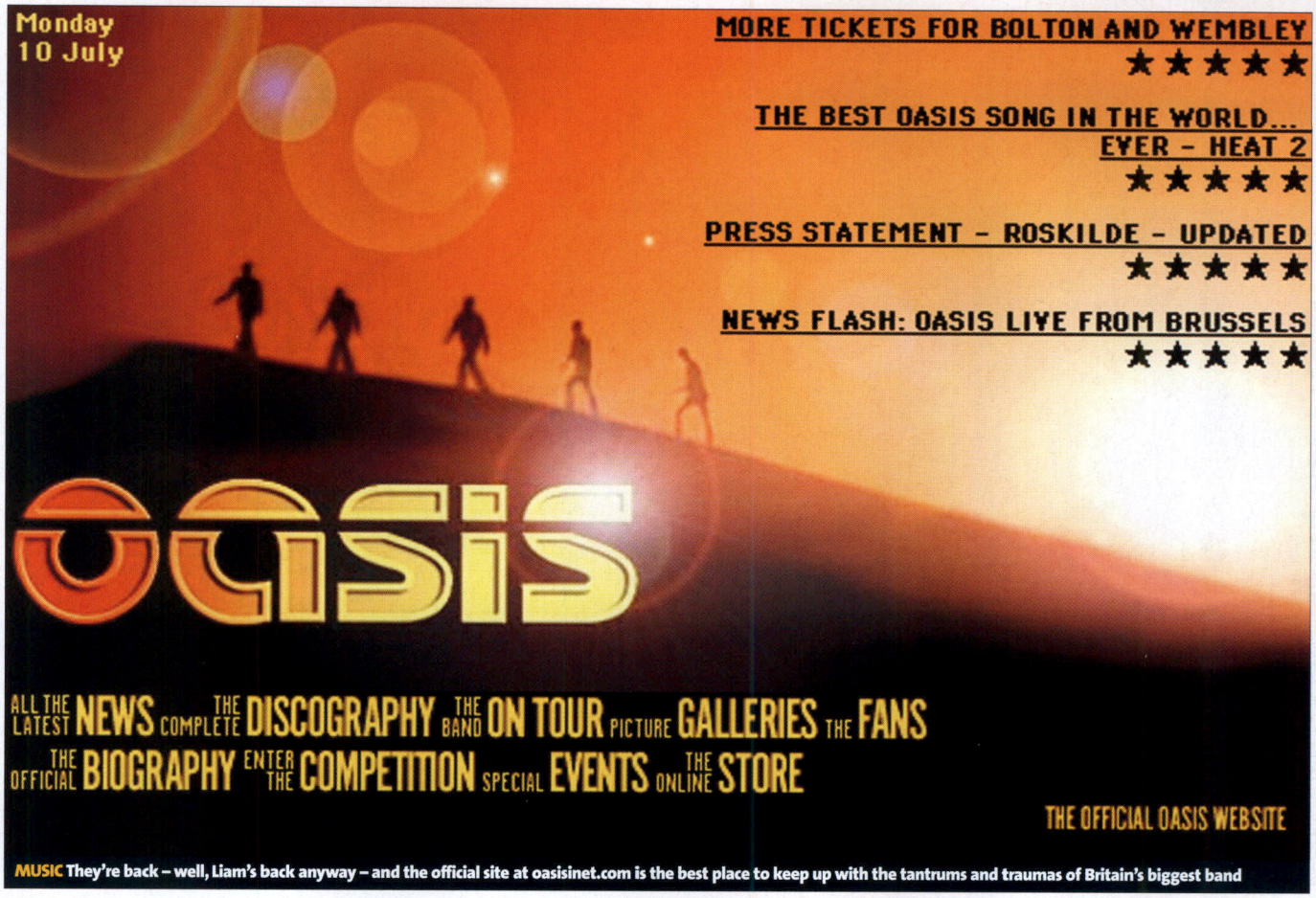

MUSIC They're back – well, Liam's back anyway – and the official site at oasisinet.com is the best place to keep up with the tantrums and traumas of Britain's biggest band

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What Car ***www.whatcar.co.uk***

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BeSonic ***www.besonic.com***
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Crunch ***www.crunch.co.uk***
Get Out There ***www.getoutthere.bt.com***
Getsigned.com ***www.get-signed.com***
Music Unsigned ***www.musicunsigned.com***
Peoplesound ***www.peoplesound.com***
Popwire ***www.popwire.com***
Vitaminic ***www.vitaminic.co.uk***

Bands & artists
The Beatles ***members.tripod.com/~taz4158/pepper.html***
Blur ***www.blur.co.uk***
David Bowie ***www.davidbowie.com***
Boyzone ***www.boyzone.co.uk***
Catatonia ***www.catatonia.com***
Chemical Brothers ***musicfanclubs.org/chemical***
Coldplay ***www.coldplay.com***
Fatboy Slim ***www.normancook.cjb.net***
Macy Gray ***www.macygray.com***
Jamiroquai ***www.jamiroquai.co.uk***
Manic Street Preachers ***www.manics.co.uk***
Oasis ***www.oasisinet.com***
Prince ***www.love4oneanother.com***
Radiohead ***www.radiohead.co.uk***
REM ***www.remhq.com***
Spice Girls ***superspice.hypermart.net***
Steps ***www.stepsofficial.com***
Stereophonics ***www.stereophonics.co.uk***
Supergrass ***www.supergrass.com***
Travis ***www.travisonline.com***
Robbie Williams ***www.robbiewilliams.co.uk***

NEWS
Newspapers
Electronic Telegraph ***www.telegraph.co.uk***

News Of The World
www.newsoftheworld.co.uk
Britain's biggest newspaper recently scooped its Sunday rivals by posting a story here on a Saturday. If you're after a steady diet of celebrity news and sleaze, look no further.

Guardian Unlimited ***www.guardianunlimited.co.uk***
Independent ***www.independent.co.uk***
MegaStar ***www.megastar.co.uk***
The Mirror ***www.mirror.co.uk***
The Sun ***www.the-sun.com***
The Times ***www.the-times.co.uk***

News services
BBC ***news.bbc.co.uk***
CNN ***www.cnn.com***
ITN ***www.itn.co.uk***
NewsNow ***www.newsnow.co.uk***
PA News ***www.pa.press.net***
Reuters ***www.reuters.com/news***

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Email addresses
Bigfoot ***bigfoot.com***
EmailFinder ***www.emailfinder.com***
People Site ***www.peoplesite.com***
WhoWhere ***www.whowhere.com***
Yahoo ***people.yahoo.com***

Phone numbers
BT Directory Enquiries ***www.bt.co.uk/phonenetuk***
Yellow Pages ***www.yell.co.uk***

RADIO
Stations & directories
BBC ***www.bbc.co.uk/radio***
Live Radio ***www.live-radio.net***
MIT List Of Radio Stations ***wmbr.mit.edu/stations/list.html***
Radio Now ***www.radionow.co.uk***
Spinner ***www.spinner.com***
StormLive ***www.stormlive.com***
TalkSport ***www.talksport.net***
Virgin Radio ***www.virginradio.co.uk***

SCIENCE
News & updates
BBC Science ***news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/default.htm***
Eureka Alert ***www.eurekalert.org***
NASA ***science.nasa.gov***
New Scientist ***www.newscientist.com***
WhyFiles ***whyfiles.news.wisc.edu***

SEARCH ENGINES
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e-mail: domains@simplynames.co.uk

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FAST ***alltheweb.com***
Google ***www.google.com***
HotBot ***www.hotbot.com***
Lycos ***www.lycos.com***
MetaCrawler ***www.metacrawler.com***
Mirago ***www.mirago.co.uk***
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Online auctions
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Auction Universe
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eBid ***www.ebid.co.uk***
eSwap ***www.eswap.co.uk***
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Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
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Shopping directories
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Buckingham Gate
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Enterprise City
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IMRG ***shops.imrg.org***
Inshop.co.uk ***www.inshop.co.uk***
Internet Shopping
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ShopGuide ***www.shopguide.co.uk***
Shoppers Universe
shoppersuniverse.com
Shopping UK
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ShopSmart ***www.shopsmart.com***
Shops On The Net ***www.sotn.com***
Shop Spy ***www.shopspy.co.uk***
Taxi ***www.mytaxi.co.uk***
Virtual Mall ***www.thevirtualmall.co.uk***
UK Max ***www.ukmax.co.uk/shopping***
UK Shopping Zone
ukshoppingzone.co.uk
ValueMad ***www.valuemad.com***

SPORT
FA Premiership clubs
Arsenal ***www.arsenal.co.uk***
Aston Villa ***www.astonvilla-fc.co.uk***
Bradford City
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Charlton Athletic
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Chelsea ***www.chelseafc.co.uk***
Coventry City ***www.ccfc.co.uk***
Derby County ***www.dcfc.co.uk***
Everton ***www.evertonfc.com***
Ipswich Town ***www.itfc.co.uk***
Leeds United ***www.lufc.co.uk***
Leicester City ***www.lcfc.co.uk***
Liverpool ***www.liverpoolfc.net***
Manchester United
www.manutd.com
Middlesbrough ***www.mfc.co.uk***
Newcastle United ***www.nufc.co.uk***
Southampton
www.saintsfc.co.uk/index.htm
Sunderland
www.sunderland-afc.com
Tottenham Hotspur
www.spurs.co.uk
West Ham Utd ***www.whufc.co.uk***

MANCHESTER CITY
www.mcfc.co.uk
Joe Royle's loveable scallies are back in the Premiership at last, and their official site is already a top six contender, courtesy of some fine multimedia content.

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Martial Arts
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Motorbike Racing
www.motograndprix.com
Racing ***www.racingpost.co.uk***
Rugby League ***www.rleague.com***
Rugby Union ***www.scrum.com***
Snooker ***www.snookernet.com***
Tennis ***www.tennis.com***

STYLE & FASHION
Main sites
BeautyLink ***www.beautylink.com***
Cosmopolitan ***www.cosmomag.com***
Fashion And Beauty Internet
Association ***www.fbia.com***
Fashionfile ***www.fashionfile.co.uk***
Fashion Mall ***www.fashionmall.com***
FashionNet ***www.fashion.net***
Haburi ***www.haburi.co.uk***
Models.com ***www.models.com***
Salonweb ***www.salonweb.com***
Style Experts ***www.stylexperts.com***
Vogue ***www.vogue.com***

TELEVISION
Top shows
Brookside ***www.brookie.com***
Coronation Street
www.coronationstreet.co.uk
EastEnders
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Friends ***friends.warnerbros.com***
Hollyoaks ***www.hollyoaks.com***
Neighbours ***www.neighbours.com***
Jerry Springer ***www.universalstudios.com/tv/jerryspringer***
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?
www.phone-a-friend.com
X-Files ***www.thex-files.com***

TV companies
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Channel Five ***www.channel5.co.uk***
ITV ***www.itv.co.uk***
ONdigital ***www.ondigital.co.uk***
Sky ***www.sky.co.uk***

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Air France ***www.airfrance.com***
American Airlines ***www.aa.com***
Britannia
www.britanniaairways.com
BA ***www.british-airways.com***
British Midland
www.iflybritishmidland.com
Buzz ***www.buzzaway.com***
Continental ***www.flycontinental.com***
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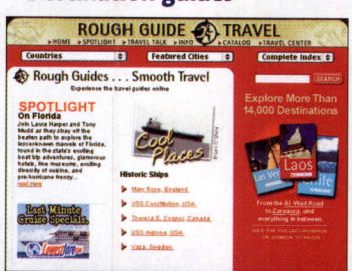
Go ***www.go-fly.com***
Iberia ***www.iberia.com***
KLM ***www.klmuk.com***
Lufthansa ***www.lufthansa.com***
Qantas ***www.qantas.com.au***
United Airlines ***www.ual.com***
Virgin Air ***www.virgin-atlantic.com***

Destination guides



Rough Guides
travel.roughguides.com
They're a generous lot at Rough Guides – much of the content from their award-winning guide books is available to read here, along with message boards and some special features.

Australia ***australia-online.com***
Caribbean
www.caribbean-travel.com
France ***www.franceway.com***
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Greece ***www.areianet.gr/infoxenios***
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Japan ***www.jnto.go.jp***
Lonely Planet ***www.lonelyplanet.com***
Portugal ***www.portugal-web.com***
Ski Club Of Great Britain
www.skiclub.co.uk
Spain ***www.tourspain.es***
UK ***www.visitbritain.com***
US ***www.go-unitedstates.com***

Ferries
Ferry Savers ***www.ferrysavers.co.uk***
P&O ***www.poef.com/poef/index.htm***
Travel Britain ***www.travelbritain.com/UKPassengerFerries.html***
Travel.World
www.travel.world.co.uk/ferries.htm

Rail travel
Euro Railways
www.eurorailways.com
Great Eastern Railway
www.ger.co.uk
Great Western Trains
www.great-western-trains.co.uk
Railtrack ***www.railtrack.co.uk***
Scotrail ***www.scotrail.co.uk***
Trainline ***www.thetrainline.com***
UK Public Transport Information
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Virgin Trains ***www.virgintrains.co.uk***

Travel agents
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Airtickets ***www.airtickets.co.uk***
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*Surftime Anytime costs £19.99 per month from BT.

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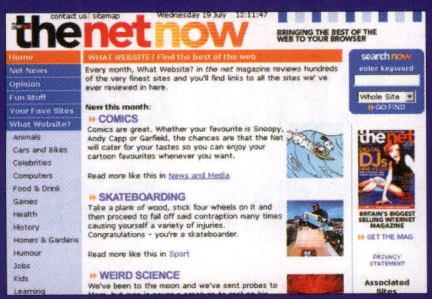
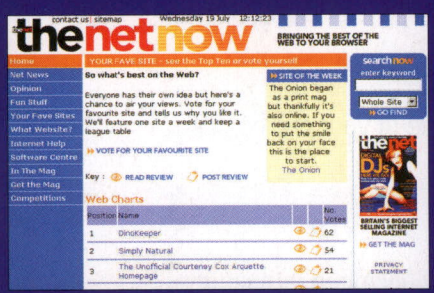


WHAT WEBSITE?

Find links to every Web address we mention here



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Welcome to Freeserve, the UK's No. 1 for the Internet. Whatever you want from the Internet, you can get it on Freeserve. Our content is second to none, covering all the topics that you might want to read about. Whether you like shopping, sport, news, or chat, you'll find all these and much, much more on Freeserve Today at *www.freeserve.com*.

Freeserve is the Internet's leader for great content, but that's not all. Almost 2 million people are currently online as members of the nation's most popular Internet Service Provider (ISP).

There are lots of ISPs that have tried to introduce unmetered Internet access, and many people have had to wait for it as a result. However, you can always rely on Freeserve not to make empty promises – and you can now get unmetered access to the Web through Freeserve.

We give you three ways of paying for your Internet calls. **No Ties Freeserve Time** lets you pay as you go, charging for each call. **Off Peak Freeserve Time** gives you unmetered Net access from 6pm until 8am during the week and all day at weekends – for just £4.99 per month. Or for £10 per month, you can have unmetered access 24 hours per day, seven days per week with **Unlimited Freeserve Time**. See *www.freeserve.com/time* for more information.

We don't charge for the unlimited email addresses we give you. And you'll even get 15 megabytes of free website space.

Sign up online at *www.freeserve.com* or pick up the CD at Dixons, Currys, PC World, The Link or @jakarta. It's free.

E-MAIL

A letter from wherever

Imagine how much easier life could be if you were able to send letters immediately. And if you've ever waited for an urgent message, you'll know that the post can be slow, especially if you're waiting for something from abroad.

Email is different. It allows you to send messages across the world in seconds, and receive a reply in minutes. And with Freeserve, you don't have to pay a penny.

When you sign up with Freeserve, you'll get an unlimited number of email addresses, absolutely free. Messages are free to send and receive; all you pay is the cost of the call to connect to the Internet.

CHANNEL GUIDE

Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

Today

Freeserve has always strived to provide the best content on the Web, and the recently redesigned homepage called the Today channel has been styled with an exciting mix of topical content and features to enjoy. Go there today! *www.freeserve.com*

Auctions

The thrill of bidding for items at bargain prices is no longer confined to auction rooms. By going to FSauctions at *www.fsauctions.co.uk*, you can peruse the wide variety of merchandise on offer and place your bid. It's up to you to decide how high to go!

OUR SITE

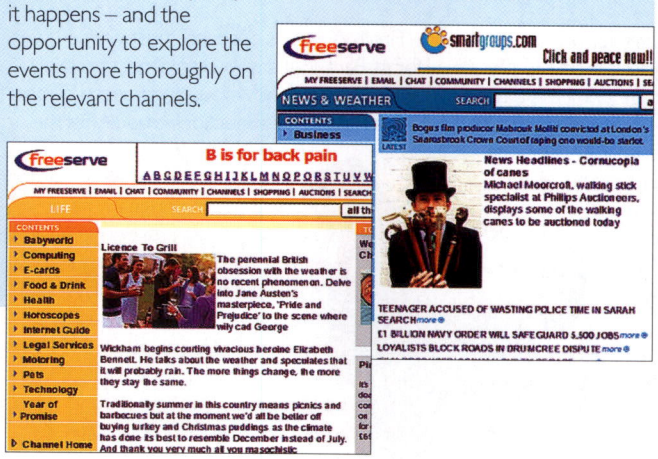
Welcome to our home

At Freeserve we don't just strive to bring you free Web space, unlimited free email addresses and a choice of Internet access packages. We're also dedicated to bringing you the very best content on the Internet and collecting it all under one roof: on the Freeserve Today page at *www.freeserve.com*.

To make the most of Today, why not treat it as your home and make it your homepage on the Web, so you can check it every day. That way you'll get a fantastic digest of all the latest news, weather and sport just as it happens – and the opportunity to explore the events more thoroughly on the relevant channels.

But Freeserve isn't limited to hard news and events. Try the feature-packed Life channel, follow the stars of stage and screen with the Entertainment channel, plan a holiday with the Travel channel, get talking and meet like-minded people on our Chat channel or search for a job on the Careers channel. If you have a small business you shouldn't miss the Business section. Or there's the recently refurbished women's channel at iCircle, Sport, Learning, and Money, as well as lots more.

Whatever you want, it'll be on *www.freeserve.com*.



'You'll get a fantastic digest of all the latest news, weather and sport, just as it happens'

YOUR SITE

Design your own place

The Internet is a great invention in that it lets absolutely anyone stand up and put their opinions across. And you can do it too, with a little help from Freeserve.

As a member of Freeserve we'll give you a massive 15Mb of space in which to build your own website, in addition to free email addresses. You can make your site about whatever you want, be it your family, interests or favourite pop star.

And the free programmes on the Freeserve sign-up CD make it easy to get your site up and running.

In fact, the only difficult thing will be deciding what your site is to be about!

Get talking

The Internet is a great place to meet people with similar interests. Find out how to get started on Web chat.

page xii

SPEECHMAIL

How to get your email by phone – thanks to Freeserve

There's always the danger with email that you might need to read your messages when you don't have Internet access. But that needn't be a problem any longer, thanks to Freeserve.

Speechmail allows you to access your email messages over the phone, without a computer. And as you would expect, there's absolutely no subscription charge for Freeserve members.

To access the service, all you have to do is sign up at the Web address below. Then you'll be given a phone number which you can use to access your mail. And the best thing is, you can ring your number from any phone – including your mobile. Which means that, no matter how important the message you're waiting for, you won't need to be sat in front of a computer screen to check your mail.

For more details on Speechmail, check the site below. You might not switch on your modem again!

www.freeserve.com/speechmail

Business

Whether you've got an established business or are a newcomer, Clearlybusiness.com, associated with both Freeserve and Barclays, can help. It's a complete online resource aimed at reducing hassle as well as your costs!

Careers

You're wired, now get hired – not fired. The Careers channel lets you search databases of 70,000 jobs nationwide; you can apply online, or submit your CV and wait for employers in your area to come to you!

Chat

Our ever-popular chat service is a great hit. You can use our new 3D chat rooms to get around and explore virtual reality worlds, or even set up your own chatgroups.

Entertainment

The latest releases in the worlds of film and music are all here on the Freeserve Entertainment channel. From Mozart to Moby and Antonioni to *Antz*, it's all in Entertainment.

Health

The Freeserve Health channel will help you stay in good order. The channel is packed full of information and advice on everything from herbal medicine through to the latest medical breakthroughs.

Tony Stone; Image Bank; Retna

Bag yourself a bargain

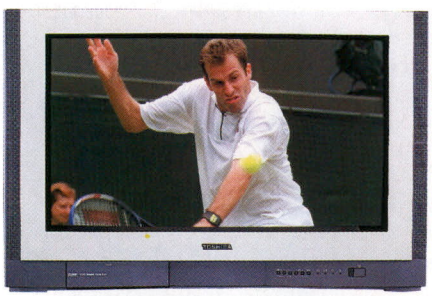
powered by freeserve
www.freeserve.com

Freeserve is going bidding mad in August. Here's what you can expect on FSauctions.co.uk, the Freeserve auctions channel

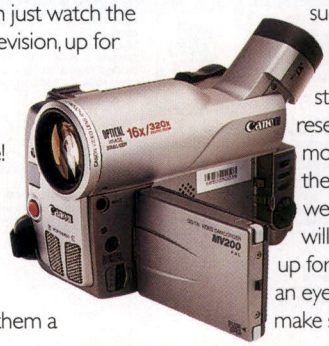
It's fair to say that just about everyone loves a bargain. And with the summer upon us, many people will be looking to buy those sunny day essentials such as a bicycle, camcorder and sports kit.

But before you rush off to the shops, firstly have a look at the Freeserve auction channel on ***www.fsauctions.co.uk***. And this month is a great time to do it, because the site has three themes, so everyone should be able to find something they want to bid for.

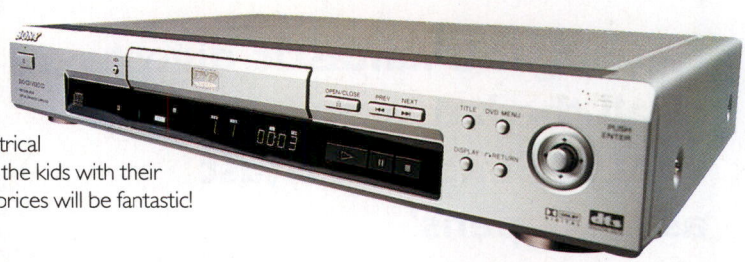
The highlight of the special offers for sport fans will be the football special. Celebrating the beginning of the new football season, FSauctions.co.uk are going soccer crazy with the launch of Football Focus. During this time there will be all you could possibly want to get ready for the terraces, or even just watch the whole thing in front of the television, up for grabs – signed football shirts, satellite TV, DVD players and widescreen televisions will all be on auction, plus a lot more!



Of course, the school holidays will be coming to an end after August. Advances in technology mean that children often use the latest computers at school, so give them a head start and get a new PC or laptop to use at home. They'll be loads up for grabs on FSauctions.co.uk, along with other electrical gadgets that will help the kids with their homework. And the prices will be fantastic!



Finally, August is probably most well-known for its Bank Holiday. You can almost certainly expect rain, but now you can expect a bargain as well, thanks to FSauctions.co.uk! After the success of the '£1' offer in May, prices will once again be slashed with bidding on many items starting at just one pound, with no reserve! In May items such as a new mountain bike, an MP3 player and the chance to win a Ferrari for a weekend all began at £1, and there will be just as many exciting things up for auction this time around. Keep an eye on ***www.fsauctions.co.uk*** to make sure you don't miss the bargains!



CHANNEL GUIDE

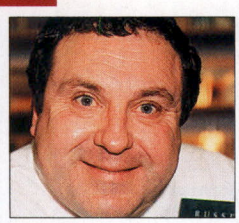
Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

Homes and Gardens

Everything you'll need to look after your home and garden is on the Freeserve Homes and Gardens channel; from maintenance, to advice on how to make moving house easier!

Learning

From SATS right through to A-level, Freeserve Learning is there to help you through your studies with an interactive learning environment to encourage learning skills. And now it's possible to take an online course, thanks to BlueU.com.



Life

The Life channel is an exclusive features magazine which brings you the latest lowdown on everything that matters, online and off. Whatever you're into, you'll enjoy Life.

Money

Freeserve will help you keep your finances healthy with expert advice. Whether you want savings tips or advice on choosing an ISA, you can keep your pocket full with Freeserve.

Motoring

Get on the road with the new Freeserve motoring channel, which is your one-stop shop for everything car-related. You can buy your new car and arrange your insurance and finances online, with some great savings to be had.

Bidding... and Winning

So you're tempted to make the most of the bargains on FSauctions.co.uk. But how do you go about it? We explain how the whole business of auctions works.

For the first-timer, Internet auctions can be a little confusing. After all, they aren't like traditional auctions with lots of people crammed into a room, and an auctioneer stood at the front with a hammer. Well, you might be surprised to learn that they are actually really easy to use, and FSauctions.co.uk are easier than most! Bidding on a Web auction is often furious but always an awful lot of fun.

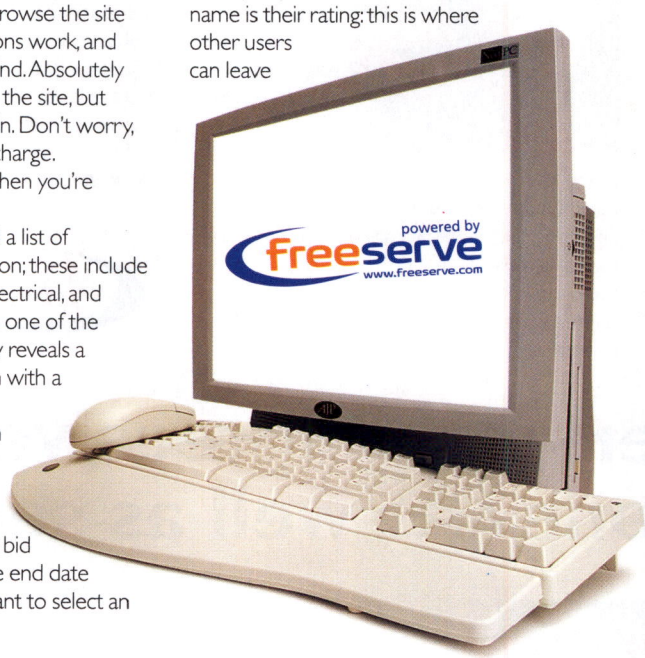
The best thing about bidding on an Internet auction is that you don't have to sit at your computer keeping an eye on the bidding. Items are generally up for auction for at least a week, so you can log on to the site at ***www.fsauctions.co.uk*** just a couple of times over that period to see how your chosen item is doing.

At first it's probably best to browse the site and just get used to how auctions work, and the sort of content that you'll find. Absolutely anyone can take a look around the site, but to bid and sell you'll need to join. Don't worry, however: registering is free of charge. You'll receive a password, and then you're ready to go!

On the homepage you'll find a list of categories of items up for auction; these include Collectibles, Computers and Electrical, and Home and Garden. Clicking on one of the categories that takes your fancy reveals a number of sub-categories, each with a figure beside so you know the number of items available. Then click on one of the sub-categories to reveal all the items listed in that section, as well as the starting and current bid price, and most importantly, the end date for each particular lot! If you want to select an individual item to view, simply click on it and you'll be able to see information posted by the seller, and you'll be invited to join in the bidding.

But before you take the plunge, you need to be aware of the various types of auction that exist. The straight auction is the most straightforward, where the highest bid after a set time is the winner, not matter how high or low it is. A reserve auction, meanwhile, is where a certain price has to be reached before the item can be sold. A Dutch auction allows you to buy multiple quantities of each item. It is also possible for items to be sold at a fixed price.

And then it's time to start bidding! Once you've found something you'd like to go for, you generally just need to select the item, enter the email address you joined with as well as your password, and enter the amount you'd like to bid. Make sure you note the reserve price – if you don't meet it, your bid won't be accepted. Now you just have to wait. Next to the seller's name is their rating: this is where other users can leave feedback about them, so it's your chance to find out how easy previous sales were.



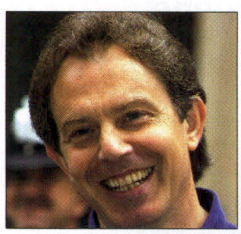
Let FSauctions help you find what you want

Meanwhile, of course, lots of other people are viewing the same auctions and it's very possible that someone else will put in a higher bid. If this is the case then FSauctions.co.uk will email you and let you know. Just like sitting in an auction house, you'll then have the opportunity to place another, higher, bid if you want to.

If, however, you really don't want to sit around waiting, you can use Robobid. This little piece of genius allows you to enter the maximum amount you're prepared to pay. It then increases the bidding for you each time you're outbid, until your maximum is reached. That way, you don't have to keep checking where the bidding stands, and you'll never have to pay more than you're prepared to.

So, you've done your bidding and you've won. What next? Well, FSauctions.co.uk will then email you to confirm this. Then you and the seller need to get in touch to sort out payment and delivery, and that's it. And you are well protected, thanks to the FSauctions.co.uk promise: with free buyer's insurance, secure payment, escrow services and 24-hour customer service both your money and goods are safe. It's as simple as that! Happy bidding...

www.fsauctions.co.uk



News

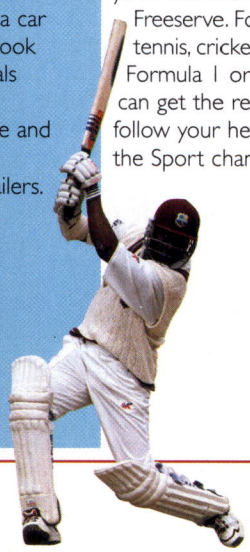
Get tomorrow's papers today with this superb news service. You'll get all the latest UK and foreign stories, together with business news and a complete rundown of headlines as they happen.

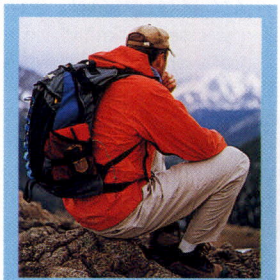
Shopping

The Freeserve Shopping channel can provide flowers or food, a car or a computer. Look out for great deals and savings from SHOP@freeserve and now the new Marketplace retailers.

Sport

Whatever your sport, you'll find it on Freeserve. Football, tennis, cricket, rugby, Formula 1 or golf; you can get the results and follow your heroes on the Sport channel.



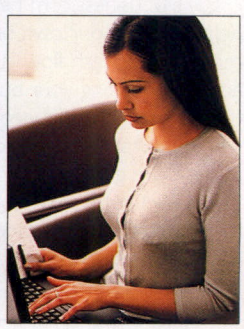


Travel

Click on the Freeserve Travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide. There are always sensational last-minute deals on offer.

Women

Web women need look no further than the Freeserve women's channel, iCircle.com, for the latest features, information and advice.



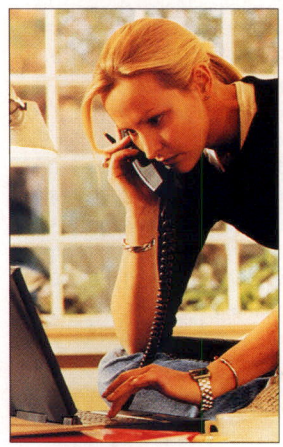
Retna; Empics; PA; Image Bank; Autocar

Stick with Freeserve for a better deal

Other ISPs have collapsed under the strain, but Freeserve delivers a reliable service

The business of free Internet Service Providers (ISPs) is a heady one – new ISPs claiming to offer free access are popping up all the time. Many haven't survived the rush. LineOne has recently been forced to abandon its unlimited time offer, and the service will be withdrawn at the end of September. Meanwhile, Liberty Surf had to suspend sales of its unmetered service at the beginning of June. It seems that other ISPs just can't make the grade, often promising a service that they simply can't deliver when demand becomes too high. Virgin, meanwhile, had to delay the June national rollout of its unmetered Internet service while it ironed out its problems.

When you look at it like this, the difference between Freeserve and the rest becomes more and more obvious. Freeserve was the first ISP to abandon subscriptions – monthly fees for the privilege of accessing the Internet. So naturally, because of its experience, Freeserve has the edge when it comes to understanding what its members



want, and is able to deal with the demand that is placed on it.

Unlimited Freeserve Time is a good example of this – unlike many other ISPs, Freeserve promises to give you 24-hour, 365-day access without any Internet call charges. All you have to do is spend a minimum of £10 a month on national or international telephone calls. You see, Freeserve manages to keep all its promises to its members. Compare this to services like that offered with BT Connect, whose Anytime package costs from £29.99 a month, World Online where you have to move telephone provider and pay £14.99 a month, and AOL, who do not offer an unlimited time package but charge £9.99 a month and a penny for every minute you are online. And take into account that NTL customers are still waiting for their unlimited Internet access, even though they launched that service in April, and that AltaVista, having launched their free Internet connection service at the end of June, have increased their proposed prices to around £60 a year. Then you'll see that not only do you get a guaranteed reliable service from Freeserve, but that you'll receive great value for money as well.

So stick with Freeserve for the better deal!

www.freeserve.com/time

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

With Freeserve you'll receive great value for money as well as service

NEW ON FREESERVE

Check out some of our great new features

A clear advantage for your business

It's often difficult for small businesses to find advice on surviving – after all, business is a cut-throat world. But Clearlybusiness.com, backed by Freeserve and Barclays, is there to cater for precisely those people running a small business or thinking of setting one up.

The site offers advice on every aspect of creating and managing a successful enterprise, from finding funds and marketing your product to dealing with the VAT man and working solo.

Clearlybusiness.com has partners to help you run your own business and manage your cash flow. It also offers advice on getting your business onto the Internet, and allows online ordering of supplies – and the services it offers are growing every day.

If you've got a small business or are considering beginning one, see the Clearlybusiness.com site at *www.clearlybusiness.com.*

Learn another talent online

Lots of people would love to learn another skill or talent, but just can't spare the time to take lessons. All that can now change with the Freeserve Learning channel, which has teamed up with BlueU.com to provide an extensive range of online training course.

The courses, which range from Internet literacy classes through to IT management and Java programming, are ideal for small businesses, or anyone who is looking to improve their personal skills and therefore their employability! And the best thing is that because the courses are delivered via the Internet, there's no need to leave your desk. All the support you could want is delivered via email.

If you're still not sure, take one of the free sample courses to see how you get on. It's the best way to increase your personal development. For more details see: *www.freeserve.com/learning/etraining*

Smartgroups take off on Freeserve

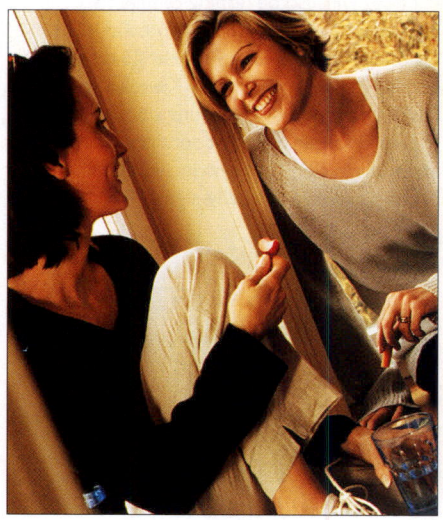
All around the world more and more people are becoming connected thanks to SmartGroups

Since its launch, the Freeserve Communities channel, SmartGroups.com, has seen more and more people join up to chat to friends and other like-minded individuals. Basically SmartGroups is aimed at anyone who needs to organise, or communicate with, a group of people, from sports or fan club leaders to anyone arranging a one-off social event. Leaders are able to do a host of things, including sending email bulletins, hold online votes, circulate information and centrally update and store the group's calendars, diaries or archives.

SmartGroups has become popular because, like Freeserve, it believes that the Internet should be free to all. With SmartGroups on Freeserve, group leaders and organisers can co-ordinate activities online for absolutely nothing.

It is expected that SmartGroups will change the way the Internet works, allowing an easy way for people to interact and get together. 'The Internet is supposed to be the key to unlimited global communication. But, we haven't even scratched the surface of what it can do yet,' says SmartGroups MD Richard Prout. 'Online groups represent the third generation of Internet useage. By combining the best aspects of email and the Web, and adding features such as calendars, diaries and online voting, SmartGroups will add an extra dimension to the Internet and make it part of everybody's daily routine.'

Using SmartGroups is very easy. To take a look at the most popular groups on Smart Groups.com (see right for a list of five), simply go to the homepage at *www.smartgroups.com* and enter the name of the group into the search box. Your SmartGroup, as well as other related ones, should appear as a link. You can also search on any subject that interests you, to see if any groups have been created. And if there isn't one, why not set up your own? You are guided through the process on the site. *www.smartgroups.com*



Some popular groups

Electronic Pub

Exactly what it says – an online pub. Contains all manner of discussion, no matter how irrelevant. Just like the real thing, except without the bartender.

Ibiza 2000

When the holiday is over, don't despair; just come to this group and share your experiences and memories with the other members.

Phobics

Terrified of buttons, foam or flying? This is the group to find out others like you, the name for your condition and discuss what you can do about it.

The Rock Society

If you like your music to rock, then this is the place you should go. Remember: it's not just music, it's a way of life...

Top 100 Sexist Men

One for the ladies. Join the group to vote for your favourite man and add your own choice to the list. Harmless fun.

Get a share in the market

The world of the stock market can be very confusing – there are lots of specialist terms to use which can be bewildering to the beginner. However, the newly-launched StockAcademy aims to make trading a little easier and less complicated.

StockAcademy allows users to take control of their investment opportunities by offering educational content on how to trade in shares. The clear tutorials cover all you need to know about the stock market, from 'What is a share?' to 'The limitations of value investing'.

Users will also be kept up-to-date with all the latest shares news, thanks to easy access to information from UK-iNvest and Standard and Poors news feed. The latest real-time share prices will also be available for dealing so users know where they stand at all times.

www.stockacademy.com

Freeserve plc is an Appointed Representative of StockAcademy. StockAcademy is a trading name of GlobenetDirect.com Ltd. which is a member of the LSE and regulated by the SFA.

stockacademy

Freeserve keeps getting faster

The latest technologies mean that the Internet is becoming faster and faster all the time. Freeserve recognises this, and as such has just launched its new Freeserveplus for businesses service. The Freeserveplus for home users will be available shortly.

Based on ADSL technology, Freeserveplus offers an Internet connection which is up to 40 times faster than a standard modem! Which all equates to faster downloads, and therefore a faster turnaround for your information. The 'always on' access also means that no time is wasted in dialling in for messages or to check information. Finally, the extra speed means that a network of PCs in the office can be connected without sacrificing any speed.

For home users it will mean that downloads will be much quicker, saving you both time and, perhaps more importantly, money on your phone bill!

For more information on the service, see *www.freeserve.com/plus/business*

Image Bank; Retna; Newsmakers

A sporting summer

powered by freeserve
www.freeserve.com

Even though Euro 2000 and Wimbledon have finished, there's plenty of sport still to come this summer. Why not follow all the action on Freeserve?

Football kicking off

If the disappointment of Euro 2000 is still fresh in your memory, there's only one way to recover: with a steady diet of football, football and more football. And where better to follow the ups and downs of the 2000/01 season, which kicks off on 19 August, than the top-of-the-league Freeserve Sport channel *www.freeserve.com/sport.*

The unparalleled sport coverage on Freeserve will keep you up-to-date with all the latest scores, transfer deals and league placings. And what a season it promises to be, with the big clubs digging deep into their pockets to catch up with Manchester United.

Arsenal, despite a relatively disappointing 1999/00 campaign, remain the most dangerous of the chasing pack. Manager Arsene Wenger has paid out £6m to make winger Robert Pires the latest Frenchman at Highbury, while the amounts of cash available to him this summer show the club's ambition.

Chelsea, too, haven't been resting on their laurels. Gianluca Vialli's capture of former Leeds hero Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink will add steel to the Blues' frontline, while Croatian star Mario Stanic will provide competition in midfield. If Vialli's undoubtedly talented squad can add consistency to their armoury, they will be genuine title contenders.

Leeds will also be hoping to fulfil their potential this season; often touted as 'the next big thing', David O'Leary's youthful team are coming of age, and in Harry Kewell and Alan Smith boast two bright young stars.

Liverpool can already count on a dazzling array of attacking options, including a certain Michael Owen and newly-signed Nick Barmby, but have now added the experience of Gary McAllister and German defender Marcus Babbel, while Tottenham's spending should make them a force again.

Of course, it's not just at the top where things will be tight: Ipswich and Charlton have both been thrust from the First Division into a relegation free-for-all which could also involve last season's escapees Bradford and perennial strugglers Southampton.

Freeserve Sport will deliver all the latest news, results, statistics and interactive games on what promises to be an exciting and unpredictable season, and we'll help you stay well ahead of the game!

F1: the stage is set for another classic climax

Manchester United will be out to continue their winning form in the 2000/01 season

F1 heating up...

It's almost possible to smell the petrol – the Formula One season is heating up as we head past the midway stage and towards the home straight and the closing part of the season. The stage is set for another classic climax, with a number of drivers still in contention for the title. And of course we are entering the start of the so-called 'Silly Season', where rumours abound over which team each of the drivers will be going to next year.

But before the end of the season there are still a number of races to go, including the Hungarian Grand Prix on 13 August and the Belgian Grand Prix on 27 August.

Last year's Hungarian Grand Prix was won by flying Finn Mika Hakkinen, who will hoping to repeat his performance this year and boost his championship standing!

As for the Belgian Grand Prix: just about every race held at the Spa Francorchamps circuit has been a classic, and this year promises to be no exception. The weather always plays a huge part in the proceedings – it's been known for it to rain at one side of the track but not the other – and presumably Schumacher, the acknowledged master in the rain, will be praying for a downpour! Coulthard won last year, and will be trying hard to keep the German off the top spot. You can keep up with all the latest news, views and action from one of the world's fastest sports, on the Freeserve Sport channel: *www.freeserve.com/sport*

Be sure to catch the cricket

Cricket bowling along

The cricket season continues this month with the third, fourth and fifth test matches – once again everyone will be cheering on England! The series is a close-run thing at the moment, so the pressure will be on at the test matches which take place at Headingley and the Oval during August. The easiest way to follow the tests, national and international cricket has to be on *www.freeserve.com/sport/cricket* which gives the latest cricket news and results as they happen, as well as lots of other features. These include team and player statistics as well as a focus on international teams, and a fixtures list so you'd need never miss a match again! It's also possible to meet other like-minded fans thanks to the cricket chat and the message board, or test how good your knowledge of the game is with the cricket trivia quiz. And keep an eye out, because the stars of cricket can often be found in front of their computers taking part in a celebrity chat – you can ask the questions that you've always wanted to know the answer to. It's also possible to buy cricket-related goodies, such as a range of bats and clothing. Finally, you can keep tabs on the Freeserve Speedster competition where Freeserve is offering a prize of a whopping £100,000 if a bowler manages to reach 100mph during the international season! As we go to press Darren Gough has managed 93mph – he's close, but will he manage to break the magic 100mph in time? There's only one way to find out when it happens – keep an eye on *www.freeserve.com/sport* for all the latest news!

England: hoping to win the rest of the tests

Kit yourself out

If you are a massive sport fan, why not take a look at Freeserve Auctions? You can buy gear and signed kit at bargain prices. See page iv for more details about bidding and auctions.

Empics

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

Going on a Summer holiday

powered by freeserve
www.freeserve.com

America to Zimbabwe; no matter where you want to go, you can plan your trip with Freeserve – it's all on Freeserve Travel

It's time to dust off those sunglasses and dig out the swimwear – yes, at long, long last, summer is upon us. Naturally, thoughts are turning towards that long-awaited break in sunnier climes – after all, no-one can guarantee the inclement British weather.

But planning your holiday can be a chore – just think of the long queues at the travel agents. So why not take a quick trip to the Freeserve Travel channel at *www.freeserve.com/travel* before you head off? It will help you plan and then buy your best-ever holiday, and you won't even need to step foot outside your home.

Blue sky and warm seas await you

So where to go?

First things first: the decision about where to go. This is more than a case of just deciding that somewhere hot would be nice – after all, you really wouldn't want to get your Beirut mixed up with your Benidorm. However, the Travel Guides section on the site helps make that important choice. Point your cursor over the general area that you're considering, and the latest information and advice about that country will be brought straight up on the screen. It's all there, in one handy place: useful addresses and numbers, accommodation and public holidays, as well as climate and visa information. In fact it couldn't be any easier to find a destination that will suit, as well as all the information about it!

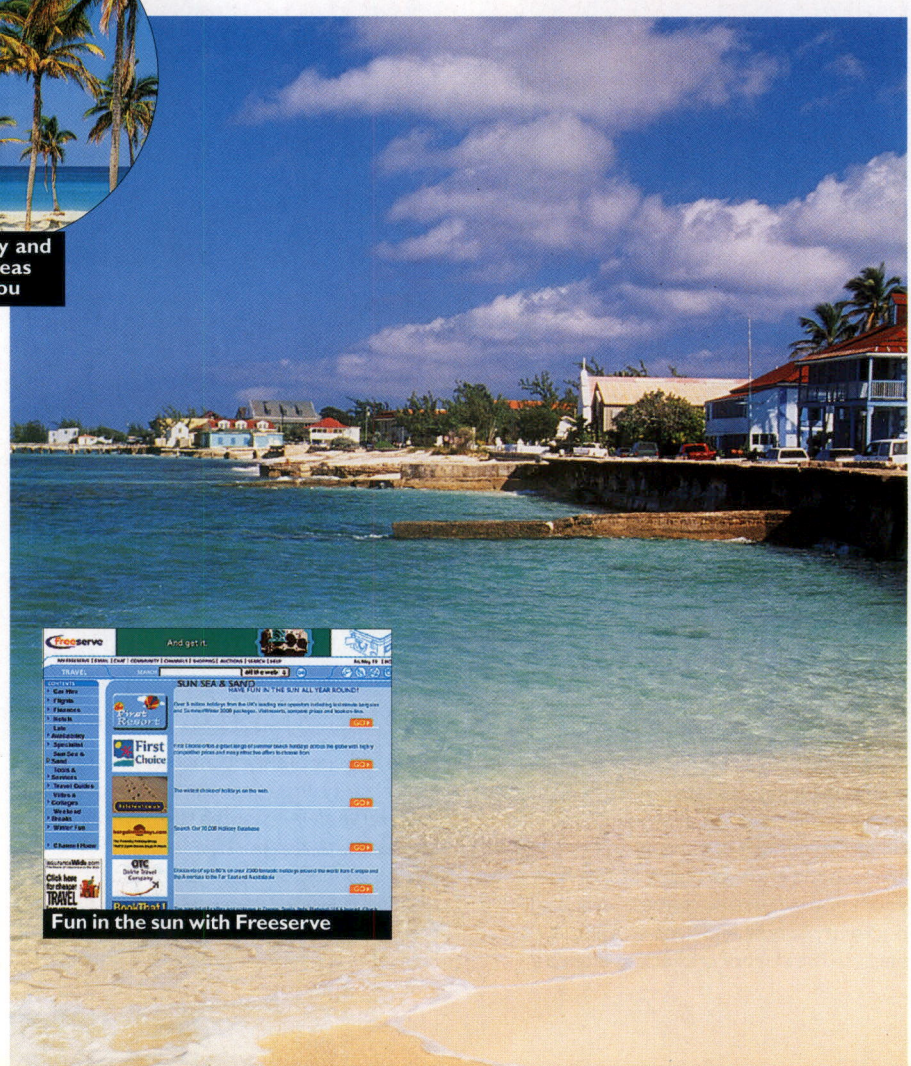
Once the decision about where to go has been made, you are faced with two choices – to organise the whole holiday yourself, or go on an organised package. It's up to you, but no matter which you choose, the Travel channel can help. Even if you've left it till the last minute, or if you fancy a quick trip away this weekend, don't panic. The Late Availability Deals section will find a destination at a price that is sure to suit most pockets – there are bargains galore to thousands of exotic locations all across the globe.

Organising it yourself

Staying somewhere nice can mean the difference between a good and a fantastic holiday. There are rooms galore to decide between on the Hotels section: whether it's a five-star room in New York or a cosy little retreat in the Scottish Highlands, the extensive searchable database lets you browse to your heart's content until a suitable bed is found. On the other hand, it's important not to invest every bit of holiday money on a hotel at the expense of other luxuries. The hotel section can help with that as well, finding the best room possible for any budget.

Of course, not everyone wants to stay in a large hotel. If that's the case, then the Villas and Cottages section can provide all the details and information to book a place to stay, whether it's a villa in Spain or a cottage in Cork – whatever takes your fancy.

Perhaps more importantly than the hotel, and with just as many options, is the choice of flight. There are thousands out there to choose from, and previously this would have meant hour upon hour stood in a travel agents'. Not any more: thanks to the wonders of the Internet it can all be done online in a



Fun in the sun with Freeserve

matter of minutes, at the Flights section of the Freeserve Travel channel. And that, of course, means that you'll be right up-to-date with the latest bargains, saving both time and money. Simply enter the place you'd like to go, the airport from which you'd like to leave and the dates you'd like to travel, and let the database do all the work to help you locate and buy tickets online. It really couldn't be any easier.

Take it easy

The whole point of going on holiday is to relax, so if you'd like to leave the organisation to someone else as well, then the Travel channel can help. Most people want a little bit of sun, sea and sand when they go on holiday: search through this section, and within days you could find yourself zipping out of the nearest airport and heading towards the surf.

There are plenty of others who prefer an adventure holiday. If your tastes lie away from the beach and more towards snorkelling, camel-trekking or white-water rafting, then it's possible to book your ideal holiday online. Click on the Specialist Holiday link and before too long you could be floating down the Amazon in a boat, or whatever takes your fancy. Hardy snow-lovers aren't forgotten either. There's a vast range of holidays and packages to choose from, for the ultimate in a skiing or snow-boarding experience.

However, holidays don't have to be week-long. You work to afford a holiday and have a break from all that stress. But often time-demands mean that we can't take always take the time off that we'd like. Weekend city breaks are perfect for this: a refreshing time away either at home or abroad without the need to take time off work. There are lots to choose from on Freeserve Travel, ideal for a deserved treat after a hard week's work.

Those little extras

So the holiday's booked, but there's still a couple of things left to do before the big day finally arrives. It's often the little extras that can make or break a holiday, so it's important to be well prepared before travel. It's more than likely that you'll need holiday money, and you may well want holiday transport. Both are easier and cheaper to organise before you leave. It's possible to get a fantastic deal on a holiday hire car on the Travel channel, and currency and insurance can be bought at extremely competitive rates – just follow the Finances link from the Travel channel.

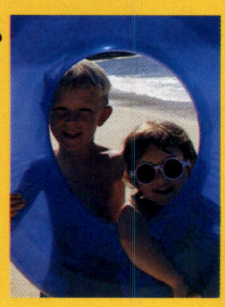
Aside from that, the Freeserve Shopping channel (*www.freeserve.com/shopping*) will cater for all those little things that help make a holiday to remember: the most fashionable sunglasses, swimming costumes and sunscreen are all available. And so you don't get bored on the beach, why not stock up on chart CDs and best-selling books, all at fantastic prices?

So there it is: all you need for the makings of the best holiday ever!

www.freeserve.com/travel

Keep the kids amused

'I'm bored,' is an all-too-often-heard cry from children during the long summer holidays. But there may be a solution for inspiration for trips and activities in the UK – the Freeserve Fun Finder (www.freeserve.com/funfinder/). A massive database full of events going on across the country, the resource is searchable by activity or region and will provide plenty of ideas to keep the children happy. What's more, Freeserve members can get great deals on summer activities this year, with 2-for-1 entry into many of the UK's top attractions. Sign up with Freeserve and all the details of the offer will be sent in your welcome email.



Passport to a better holiday

Every year more and more women pack their bags and head off for sight-seeing and adventures across the globe. Before heading off, they would be wise to take a look at The Passport, the iCircle.com Travel channel, which has everything that the woman traveller could possibly need. From advice on great destinations for the solo independent traveller to information on the perfect short break, it's all here. And in case a query isn't covered, it's possible to post a question to one of the experienced experts who will be only too happy to give you an answer – whether it's on safety tips and advice, destination information or any jabs you might need.

And anyone who prefers a holiday a little out of the ordinary needn't feel left out! There are thousands of ideas and sizzling deals on great getaways, short breaks, mother and daughter, holistic and self-development holidays as well adventure travel ideas and tips on how to get active, be it on a bike, horse-riding or pitching a tent. Just take a look at *www.thepassport.co.uk.*

At The Passport, children aren't a barrier or a hindrance to travel. It's perfectly possible to travel successfully with kids in tow, or even if you're pregnant. There's lots of great advice given for both instances at the holiday clinic, to make sure you have a fantastic trip.

Of course it's important that a holiday should be glitch-free, but that doesn't always happen – sometimes things go wrong! That's where The Passport comes in, helpfully and clearly explaining all your rights when it comes to potential problems such as over-booking and insurance claims.

The Passport has everything to make your holiday a success. Just don't forget to come back!

www.thepassport.co.uk

The Passport to a fantastic holiday

Image Bank/Retna

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www.freeserve.com

Slimming out for the summer

Getting trim for your holiday needn't be a chore, thanks to iCircle.com, the Freeserve women's channel. All you need for a fitter summer!

The bikini is this summer's hottest fashion item – go into any clothes shop and they'll be row upon row of them waiting to be bought. But what if the thought of squeezing into a skimpy little number is causing you major concern?

Well relax, you aren't alone – and there is something you can do to give yourself a major confidence boost before you hit the beach this summer. Let iCircle.com help you lose 10lb in six weeks, and gain a whole new lease of life, thanks to the new and exciting slimming section on Feel Good UK.

Get slim and trim

Most women have been on a diet at some point – but many of them don't work. There's nothing worse than being limited to lettuce leaves when everyone around you is enjoying bars of chocolate and packets of crisps. That's where the iCircle.com diet comes in – it's a diet with a difference. Whereas most eating plans forbid you from eating sweet treats and pile on the guilt if you slip, the iCircle.com healthy eating plan encourages you to snack sometimes, lets you eat unlimited quantities of some foods, allows you to have takeaways and makes sure that you never go hungry! Far from being boring, the plan is the safe, exciting way to get trim, and, more importantly, stay trim.

For instance, breakfast could be cereal or porridge, perhaps even topped with honey. And if bacon has been your downfall in the past, don't worry: you're allowed a grilled bacon roll complete with ketchup. Or perhaps you'd prefer crumpets with jam – the choice is yours, and it's a varied choice.

As for lunch, on the plan it could consist of a jacket potato, soup, a sandwich, pittas or tacos: in fact, foods that you probably eat at the moment. The trick is to use low-fat alternatives, which you are guided through.

Sweet treats too

Dinner can often be a problem for women on diets who have families – after all, cooking two different meals, one for yourself and another for the rest of the clan, takes time. But the iCircle.com plan provides options that are suitable for the whole family – for example, roast chicken, salmon steak, rump steak, pork chops and pasta. Desserts needn't be dull, either – sorbet, ice cream and even raspberries with cream are on the menu. iCircle.com realises that it's difficult to drop sweet and fatty foods completely, so the emphasis is on allowing them in moderation. You can snack once or twice during the day to keep the munchies at bay: biscuits, chocolate and even red wine all count! And fast-food junkies needn't panic, you can still get your kicks with takeaway options such as a chicken tikka or vegetable curry, a Chinese dish or Thai meal. Take a look at the meal options (right)

and you'll see that dieting needn't be boring!

To really make the most of your healthy eating, it's important to exercise as well. This doesn't need to mean lengthy jogs in the rain – the iCircle.com Fitness Expert Jane Wake has compiled an excellent Bikini Workout that women of all ages, sizes and fitness levels can do to tone up those bits they aren't happy with. There isn't even any need to buy expensive equipment: as the site makes clear, even a couple of bottles of water can suffice for a pair of weights! Exercises include the Belly Flattener, the Waist Trimmer and the Thigh Slimmer.

Become inspired

Motivation can often be a problem when it comes to slimming. Everyone gets a little down-hearted at times, but the iCircle.com Health channel is there for encouragement, with tales of other slimmers' success. Take, for example, the inspirational story of 28-year-old twins Rachel Noble and Rebecca Watkinson, which is posted on the site. Both of the twins suffered weight problems, but between them they managed to lose six stones by following an eating plan and exercising. Read exactly how they did it on the site. And the 'before and after' pictures should inspire even the most hardened junk food eater to cut back!

What's more, iCircle.com never lets you forget that there are lots of other women out there in the same situation. There's the chance to talk to them via the bulletin board, which allows users to post queries and advice. It also gives the opportunity to find your correct weight for your height – lots of women believe they are overweight when really they're in the correct weight bracket for their height. Weight watching is all about finding your own healthy weight, rather than attempting to look like Ally McBeal.

Think yourself thin

It's important not to overlook the importance of attitude – if you really want to slim, you can. But if your belief slips sometimes, GMTV's nutritionist and best-selling diet author Amanda Ursell is on hand to offer advice on how to change the way you think about food, help boost your self-confidence and think yourself thin.

Finally, for the ultimate confidence boost, use the online quiz to see how you are doing. If you are following the regime properly then you'll soon start to notice excellent results. You'll be in that bikini before you know it!

www.icircle.com

Lose weight the healthy way with iCircle

Sample diet

Dieting needn't be all salads... here's a selection of meals on the Feel Good UK healthy eating plan

BREAKFAST

- Porridge made with 200ml skimmed milk, and sweetened with 1 tbsp of raisins and 1 tsp honey. Bowl of strawberries.
- One small roll with two trimmed rashers of back bacon (grilled) and a little tomato ketchup. One kiwi.
- Poached egg with grilled mushrooms. Serve it with two slices of wholemeal toast with a scraping of low-fat spread.

LUNCH

- Baked potato, topped with any of the following: reduced calorie baked beans; wafer-thin ham and chunks of pineapple; canned ratatouille; cottage cheese with chives, mixed with a grated carrot and chopped tomato. Small banana.
- Bagel filled with reduced-fat cream cheese. Serve with a salad of tinned sweetcorn, red kidney beans and cooked green beans. Small pot fruit or flavoured very low-fat fromage frais.
- Two taco shells filled with green leaves, tomato and peppers, 3 tbsp canned beans and matchbox-size lump of Cheddar, grated. Handful of cherries.

DINNER

- Roast chicken breast (no skin), two small roast potatoes, carrots and cauliflower. Gravy made with 1 tsp gravy granules. Scoop of sorbet.
- 150g (raw weight) lean rump steak (grilled), served with small portion of oven chips; mushrooms and tomatoes cooked in Frylight.
- 100g lean lamb cut into cubes and threaded onto skewers with onion and pepper. Brush with a little Worcester sauce and oil, and grill. Serve with 4 tbsp cooked rice and green leaves. Meringue nest with raspberries; 1 tbsp of single cream.

SNACKS

- Two-finger Kit Kat plus half a mango.
- Two gingernuts plus two small kiwifruit.
- Two small (125ml) glasses red wine.

Retna; PA Image Bank

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Happy talking

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

Chat's one of the most exciting things about the Internet. Here we show you how to get the best from online nattering

If there's one thing that's true about the Internet, it's that it's made the world a smaller place. Thanks to email, you needn't wait days for a letter to get to Australia – it can be there in minutes.

But Chat, which alongside email is one of the most popular things about the Internet, is even quicker. Basically, Chat works in real time – you type your message into the box provided and hit 'Send' and your message appears on the screen almost immediately. Best of all, the most you'll have to pay is the cost of a local call – which means you can talk in real-time to friends across the world for next to nothing!

So, what's the best way to get chatting? Well, most Chat rooms work in the same way. Freeserve is no exception, and has all the Chat rooms you'll need to meet like-minded people and start talking, at *www.freeserve.com/chat*. From there you'll be able to choose which 'room' you'd like to enter – basically a group of like-minded chatters in one place. There are over 20 available, ranging from 20-somethings through to teens, gay and single! After you've decided where you'd like to go, you'll have to choose a user name – it can be whatever you like, and it doesn't have to be your real name.

Then it's time to get talking! Freeserve offers three different connections, so no matter what your computer, you won't need any special downloads. Finally, click enter and you'll be transported straight to the Chat room. Alongside the Chat room is usually a list of the people who are in the room at the same time. Chat talk can look odd with abbreviations and symbols. If that sounds scary, you can always just sit back and read the conversation until you get the gist of what's happening. When you're ready to say something, type your message in the box and hit send – it'll appear almost immediately. You'll soon get the hang of what's happening. It's also possible to send a private message to anyone in the room – in most rooms just click on their name and type your message in the box which appears.

But what if you become bored with the conversation? Just go to another room; look under the 'Rooms' tab to choose one. Chatting is great, but it can be a bit impersonal – after all, you've got no idea who you're really talking to. But the latest technology means that you can get that little bit closer with Freeserve 3D Chat. Basically, 3D Chat allows you to create a character to become your personality onscreen, which you can customise. Other users do the same – it's just like chatting to a real person! The great-looking 3D worlds each have their own music soundtrack, and it's possible to make your character dance, wave and move about, expressing your feelings through its body language.

Chat isn't only limited to talking to people you don't know – Freeserve regularly features chats

Make the most of Chat

A picture tells...

What are all those funny symbols that you see in Chat rooms? Here's our guide to how to make your emotions known; just turn the symbols 90 degrees clockwise.

:-) A joke, or someone who's happy
;-) A wink
:-(Unhappiness
:-0 Shock
:* A kiss
:-P Sticking out tongue
0:-) Angel

In Freeserve Chat you can use any one of a number of pre-programmed symbols – slip in a heart, a coffee mug or even a megaphone to let everyone know what you're trying to say!

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

with famous celebrities of sport, screen and pop. Celebrity Chat works exactly the same way as regular Chat, so it's the best opportunity to ask your favourite star the questions you've always wanted interviewers to ask! For the latest news in the Chat world go to ***freeserve.yack.com***, which will tell you when and where the stars will be appearing on your screen.

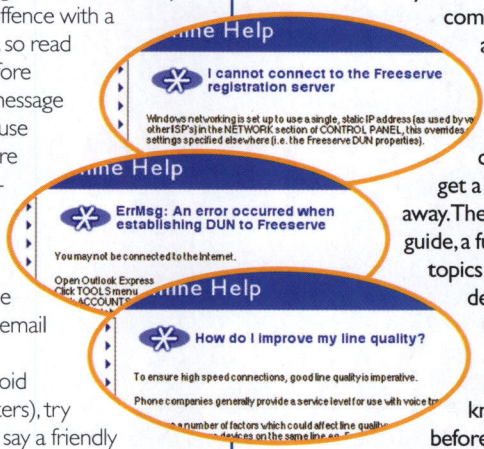
As with many things on the Internet, you have to be careful when chatting. Like email, it's easy for some people to take offence with a perfectly innocent remark, so read your message carefully before hitting 'Send'. Once your message has gone, that's it! You can use symbols to show that you're joking or smiling, for example – see the panel on the opposite page for an explanation of the most common ones. Many of the basic rules which apply to email are also relevant in a chat situation – for example, avoid 'shouting' (using capital letters), try not to ignore people who say a friendly 'hello', and be polite as you would in normal conversation. Some Chat rooms are regulated by a moderator, which means that offensive messages won't get through. However, lots of others aren't, and although many are friendly places, in some the content can get a bit racy or crude. If you feel offended by any content, many Chat rooms offer you the option of blocking messages from certain senders – Freeserve even gives you the option of blocking personal messages that are sent to you if they're getting a bit much. Alternatively, you can go to another room where the conversation is to your taste. And it's always best to think carefully before giving away your email address to anyone – Freeserve doesn't ask for your address when you start chatting, and even legitimate Freeserve representatives would never ask you to disclose personal information.

Many people choose to Chat anonymously, but even choosing an appropriate name can be difficult. Women may prefer to use an anonymous name rather than one which gives away their gender, while men using a name such as 'Hunk' may find they get unwanted attention! And remember to take everything that is said in a Chat room with a pinch of salt – after all, it's very easy to create and hide behind a personality. One of the best and the worst things about Chat is that you never really know exactly who you're talking to.

And if you decide to meet someone you've met in a Chat room then the obvious-but-important safety rules apply: be careful not to give out too many details, arrange to meet in a public place, and let someone know where you'll be. That way Chat can stay what it's meant to be – an awful lot of fun!

Online help

We've put together an awesome set of answers for all your technical queries. It's available on our website – and it's free!

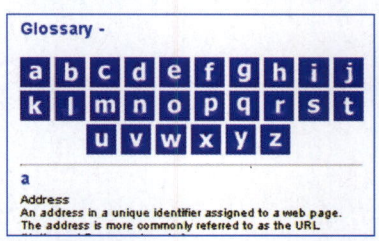


What are my options?

If you're new to the Net, Freeserve is committed to making it as easy as possible for you to get online. We've designed the help section on the Freeserve website so you can turn to Freeserve and get a straight answer, straight away. There's a complete content guide, a full alphabetical index of topics and a find function – all designed to take you straight to the answer you need. Separate sections deal with everything you need to know to avoid problems before set-up, and tell you what to expect as you begin to install the software from the CD-ROM onto your machine. It really is that simple!

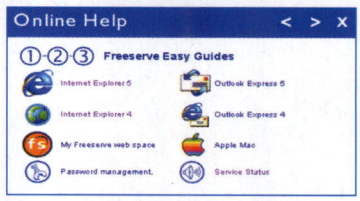
How does online help work?

It's easy! There are four main sources of information. Read through the descriptions below and you'll soon see which best suits the type of query you have. Then connect to Freeserve, visit the help section and get all your questions answered quickly.



The Glossary

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, turn to our glossary first. It's more than likely to be there.



The Easy Guides

If there's an area of your Net use that is causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a complete solution. You'll find answers sorted by subject.

Questions and Answers

If there's a specific question you need answered, turn to our Q&A section for rapid help. First select the general area from our drop-down menu, then a specific question. You may find your question has already been answered.

Contacts

If you still need help, you can email our support staff. They're the same people who staff our phone helpdesks, and they're trained to deal with your queries. Direct email addresses are listed on the contacts page. They'll be happy to help you!

How do I find answers on the CD?

Alternatively, there's also a fully comprehensive Help feature on the Freeserve start-up CD-ROM. When you put the CD in your machine you'll be given four options. The help button takes you to a comprehensive set of instructions to enable you to get online with Freeserve.

Phoneline help

Our experts are on call 24 hours a day

Using Freeserve's online help couldn't be simpler, but from time to time you might have a direct question for one of our experts. To help you get the most out of your connection, Freeserve's Technical Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Make sure you've consulted our online help before you call, as you may find we've already answered your question. If not, our trained staff can provide you with instant answers in plain English on a range of Internet subjects. Calls cost 50p per minute.

PC Support 0906 2517517 Mac 0906 7234000

Image Bank

there are lots of Internet offers, but now Freeserve actually pays you

You'll see the advantage of using Freeserve when you register for Freeserve Off Peak using SurfTime from BT. We'll give you a £1 rebate off the BT SurfTime charge of £5.99 every month that you stay online with Freeserve Off Peak. That's over 500 hours of free off peak Internet time every month. It's yet another reason why it pays you to join the UK's No. 1 for the Internet. REGISTER NOW at www.freeserve.com/time

be freeserve
www.freeserve.com

THE UK's No. 1 FOR THE INTERNET

All applications are subject to Terms of Use online and the offer is available to BT customers only. Freeserve Off Peak uses BT SurfTime charged at £5.99 per month, payable to BT.

Sign up online or pick up a free CD at any branch of

Dixons PC WORLD THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE Currys The Link @jakarta

stepbystep

Not yet bought an MP3 player? Then read our guide. Plus, Net nanny software to protect the young, and our regular look at email, browsers and newsgroups

Your technical problems well sorted with our easy-to-follow guide to the Net

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is a huge global network of computers, with literally millions of machines connected together across the planet.

HOW DO I GET ON IT?

All you really need is a computer, a modem, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and a telephone line.

WHAT CAN I DO THERE?

1 **Surf the Worldwide Web.**
2 Send someone an email.
3 **Take part in a newsgroup discussion.**
4 Make friends and get chatting with people from all over the world.

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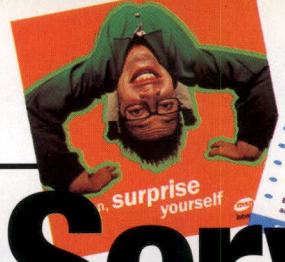
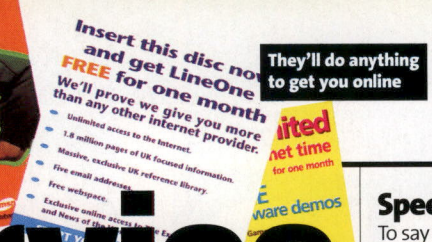




What Service Provider?

September 2000 Feel like you're drowning in a sea of ISPs? Then find out the best one to suit your needs with our handy guide

What is an ISP?

An Internet service provider, or ISP, is a company that connects you to the Internet. All you need do is exploit the provider's permanent Net connection by connecting to it.

Get the best ISP deal

Right now, literally hundreds of ISPs are vying for your business – which is great news for consumers. But to help you make a truly informed decision, we've tested the best service providers on the market.

Below, you'll find our ratings for the current crop of the best ISPs looking to connect you. There are several companies that are now offering completely free access – and that includes the price of the phone call that connects you to the Internet. LocalTel pioneered this service back in the spring with the launch of Screaming.Net. Since then several companies have started to offer free calls to the Net at certain times of the day. CallNeto800 has also launched and is offering completely free access at any time of the day. This new breed of ISP is set to change the landscape of Net access in the UK, as several other service providers investigate the possibility of offering completely free access in a bid to keep up with new trends. In other words, the future couldn't be brighter for Net consumers, as the price of getting online continues to go down.

Call costs

It's worth checking how much you'll be paying for the phone calls that connect you to the Net. Apart from the new breed of free services, nearly every ISP charges local call rates. For BT customers, this means 4p/min on weekdays between 8am-6pm; 1.5p/min during off-peak times, and 1p/min at the weekend. Check with your phone company.

Speeding up

To say things are only going to get faster is an understatement. BT's ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is now being rolled out. It offers an 'always on', high-speed connection to the Net with data delivery speeds of 10-40 times a conventional modem. At the moment, most modems operate at 56kbps (kilobits per second) or less. For info, go to ***www.btopenworld.com.***

BEGINNER'S TIP

Put the phone number you use to dial up to the Internet on your BT Friends and Family list.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Set up several free accounts. If for any reason you cannot connect to one provider, simply try another one. There's no limit to how many accounts you have.

ADVANCED TIP

Consider installing an extra phone line. It means you can have one for the phone and one for your modem, so you can use the Internet as much as you like.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
AngliaNet Limited	***www.anglianet.co.uk***	Dial-up, web hosting and design for home and business users	Unlimited
AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	A large ISP offering proprietary software to try to make connecting painless	Unlimited
Aviators Network	***www.aviators.net***	An ISP designed with aircraft-related content for the pilot and the enthusiast	Unlimited
BREATHE **FREE**	***www.breathe.co.uk***	Well-established free ISP. Easy-to-use site design	Unlimited
Btclick.com **FREE**	***www.btclick.com***	The free Internet service from BT	Unlimited
BT Internet	***www.btinternet.com***	Another Internet arm of BT, offering a full access package	Unlimited
Bun **FREE**	***www.bun.com***	The free ISP offering of *The Sun* newspaper	Unlimited
Cable and Wireless Lite **FREE**	***www.cwcom.net***	Free Net access for CW customers	Unlimited
CALLNET **FREE**	***www.callnetuk.com***	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	Unlimited
CIX	***www.cix.co.uk***	The Compulink Information eXchange. Provides Internet conferencing accounts	Unlimited
ClaraNET Ltd	***www.clara.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.com***	Long-standing ISP which offers proprietary software to aid ease-of-use and level of service	Unlimited
Connect Free **FREE**	***www.connectfree.net***	One of the very first free ISPs	Unlimited
CYBERphile Internet	***www.cyberphile.co.uk***	Business-oriented, Midlands-based provider. Specialists in leased lines, LANs, firewalls, ISDN etc	Unlimited
Dabsol **FREE**	***www.dabsol.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Direct Connection	***www.dircon.net***	Home and business ISP offering global roaming among their services	Unlimited
Easynet Ltd	***www.easynet.net***	Subscription-based dial-up service. Winner of best European ISP at this year's ISPA awards	Unlimited
EidosNet **FREE**	***www.eidosnet.co.uk***	EidosNet is brought to you by Eidos, publishers of *Tomb Raider* and other great games	Unlimited
Enterprise plc	***www.enterprise.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a host of features including game and news servers	Unlimited
F9 Free **FREE**	***www.f9.net.uk***	Free ISP from previously subscription-only service Force 9	Unlimited
Firstnet Services Ltd	***www.firstnet.co.uk***	Business Internet solution provider	Unlimited
Free Internet **FREE**	***www.free-internet.co.uk***	Free access, free mail and Web space. Comprehensive service in a neat package	Unlimited
FREENET **FREE**	***www.freenet.co.uk***	More free access with a gaming bias. Online auto sign-up and newsgroups add to the interest	Unlimited
Free Online **FREE**	***www.free-online.net***	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	Unlimited
Freeserve **FREE**	***www.freeserve.net***	Free provider from the Dixons Group of companies	Unlimited
Free to You **FREE**	***www.free2you.co.uk***	No-frills free ISP with online sign-up	Unlimited
Freewire **FREE**	***www.freewire.net***	Free ISP with no sign-up requirements	Unlimited
Freezone **FREE**	***www.freezone.co.uk***	A free ISP offering the usual package in a smart format	Unlimited
Gateway 2000 **FREE**	***www.ukgateway.net***	An ISP service from the hardware retailers of the same name. Packaged with Gateway computers	Unlimited

what service provider?

ISPs explained Using our easy-to-follow guide

FREE CONNECTIONS
There are now many companies that will get you on to the Internet without charging a subscription fee – the only thing you pay for is the price of the phone call that connects you.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
Despite the plethora of free ISPs springing up, there are still many which charge a flat monthly fee. These generally offer free technical support; most free ISPs charge by the minute.

CONTENT PROVIDERS
Content providers also charge to get you online, but provide exclusive content to members, and a sense of 'community'.

How the tables work

Description
A brief description of the services offered by the ISP in question.

Type of service
Tells you whether there is any restriction on how often you can use the Internet.

Phone number
The number to ring if you want to sign up.

Email addresses
Some service providers give you only one email address, others provide as many as you want.

Content
Outlines whether the service provider in question provides its own content and whether it is exclusive to its users.

Macintosh support
Not all service providers offer software and technical support for Macs, preferring to concentrate on PCs – so be sure to check this column out if you're an Apple user.

Web space
If you are interested in designing your own Web page, most Internet Service Providers will give you space to store it on. 2Mb should be enough for most people's requirements.

Set-up fee
Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.

Monthly charge
If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set amount per month to be online.

Phone support charges
Technical support is great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune to benefit from it. Find out how much free service providers charge per minute for calls to their technical support desks.

Telephone support hours
The hours when the technical support desk will be open to take your calls.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every effort to ensure that the data presented to you is correct. The publishers of *the Net* and NetBasics cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any Internet service provider that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme should contact eval@netbasics.com **For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at *www.netbasics.com*.**

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
01473 211922	1	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Mobile	9-5 M-F, 8-9 S-S
0800 3765432	5	Massive amount of content	Yes	10Mb	0	16.95	Free	8-10.30M-F 9-9.30S-S
0700 2842867	1	'Flightalogue' lists a host of goodies	No	15Mb	0	11.75	Standard	9-9 7 days
0870 6006006	5	Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 800001	Unlimited	From Excite	Yes	0	0	0	50p per minute	8-12 Midnight
0800 800001	5	None	Yes	10Mb	0	11.75	Local	24/7
0845 3063636	5	Online dating, Bunshopping, *The Sun* online etc	Yes	25Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 0923 001	5	Channels and account administration	No	20 Mb	0	0	National	24/7
020 73358300	5	Chat servers, channels, services, Web news	Yes	20Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
0845 3555050	Unlimited	None	Yes	30Mb	0	17.61	Local call	9-10 M-F, 12-6 S-S
0800 3582828	Unlimited	None	Yes	25Mb	0	8.99	Free	24/7
0990 000200	5	A large range of channels and a search engine	No	10Mb	0	16.95	National	8-12 Midnight
SIgn up online	Unlimited	Channel-based content provided by Virgin	No	Unlimited	0	0	Unavailable	24/7
01543 454840	1	None	Yes	0.1Mb	0	11.74	Standard	8.30-6 M-F
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	Unlimited	0	0	Metered	24/7
0800 0720000	Unlimited	User zone containing handy member services	Yes	20Mb	0	13.50	Local	9-9 7days
020 76814444	Unlimited	None	Yes	2Mb	0	11.99	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
01624 677666	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Local	9-10 M-F 10-4 S-S
0800 0737800	Unlimited	None	Yes	15Mb	0	0	National	7-11, 7 Days
0113 294 4224	Unlimited	Search engines and support	Yes	10Mb	0	12.50	Local	Business hours
Sign up online	1	Newsgroups and IE5 download	No	10Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
08700 722622	Unlimited	Games links and independent status	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National rates	9-6 7 days
0870 7060504	5	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	Premium rate	24/7
0990 500049	Unlimited	Extensive channel-based content	Yes	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Search engine page and technical support	No	10Mb	0	0	Available soon	n/a
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0870 7441111	Unlimited	On-site search engine access	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
At Gateway Stores	Unlimited	None	No	10Mb	0	0	Free	24/7

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
Go Free **FREE**	***www.gofree.co.uk***	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Unlimited
IC24 **FREE**	***www.ic24.net***	The free ISP service of Mirror Group Newspapers	Unlimited
LineOne **FREE**	***www.lineone.net***	BT's formerly paid-for home-user Internet service is now free	Unlimited
London Web Comm Ltd	***www.londonweb.net***	Useful London Local Directory will help you find everything from a plumber to an accountant	Unlimited
Netcom	***www.netcom.net.uk***	A comprehensive range of services to the home and business user	Unlimited
Net Communications Ltd	***www.netcom.co.uk***	Norwich-based ISP offering a comprehensive range of services	Unlimited
Nildram **FREE**	***www.nildram.net***	A host of features including game and news servers	Unlimited
OrbitalNet **FREE**	***www.orbitalnet.co.uk***	Dial-up, Web hosting and design for home and business users. Free for home users	Unlimited
Paradise Internet Network Service	***www.pins.co.uk***	Paradise Internet is a subscription provider which also authors software	Unlimited
Powergen Surf & Save **FREE**	***www.pgen.net***	Powergen's own ISP earns you points off your electricity bill	Unlimited
Screaming.net **FREE**	***www.screaming.net***	The pioneer of the free access/free phone call model	Unlimited
Sniff Out **FREE**	***www.sniffout.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Sonnet Internet Ltd	***www.sonnet.co.uk***	Packages and solutions for the private and business user	Unlimited
This is it! **FREE**	***www.thisisit.co.uk***	End-user targeted free ISP	Unlimited
UK Fantastic **FREE**	***www.ukfantastic.net***	Spirited free ISP offering good online technical help	Unlimited
UK Online Ltd **FREE**	***www.ukonline.co.uk***	A family-friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming software. Sign up online	Unlimited
UUNet	***www.uk.uu.net***	Wide range of business solutions and PipexDial for single/multi-user accounts	Unlimited
Virgin Net **FREE**	***www.virgin.net***	The long-standing ISP now offering a stylish free Internet access service	Unlimited
Which? Online	***www.which.net***	A free ISP from the eponymous consumer affairs magazine	Unlimited
Wireplay Internet **FREE**	***www.wireplay.com***	Wireplay is an online games network offering access to Intranet-based fast games servers	Unlimited
X-Stream Network **FREE**	***www.x-stream.com***	Offers enhanced member services, such as occasional free phone calls to the Net	Unlimited

Network performance

September 2000

Independent testing carried out by NetBasics – contact eval@netbasics.com

We test the best ISPs in the country for the reliability and speed of their connection. The tests are conducted in three areas and a star rating is given indicative of their performance. The three areas of testing are:

VARIATION IN MODEM SPEED

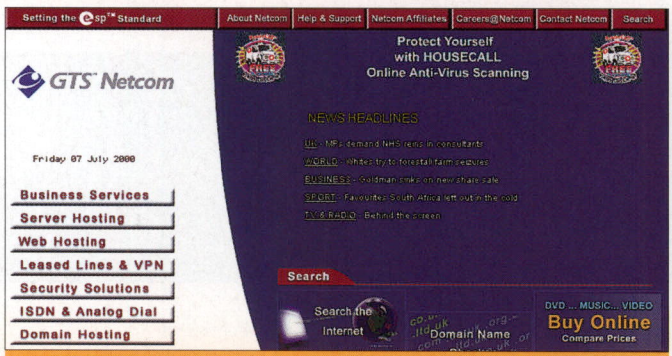
This is a gauge to measure whether you get a constant speed once a modem connects to an ISP. ISPs should offer a constant speed and we measure any variation. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses position the greater the variance in connection. This is achieved by comparison so that no ISP is favoured above others.

VARIATION IN TIME TO CONNECT

This section of the test measures the variation in how long it takes to get connected to your ISP. The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and then physically connecting.

AVAILABILITY

There's nothing more frustrating than dialling your ISP and finding you can't actually get through and on to the Net. This area measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, either through the engaged tone, or if it does not respond correctly to modem signals. The results are combined into a single reading giving us a fair way to chart ISPs based on relevant aspects of their dial-in service. The results shown in the chart are based on a sample of 50 ISPs from ongoing tests.



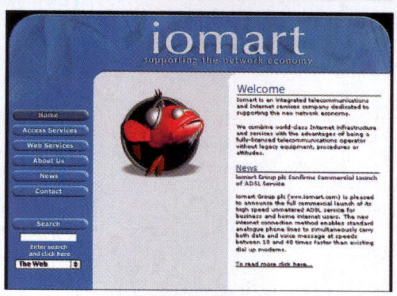
1	Netcom	★★★★★	26	Freenet	★★★★
2	Firstnet	★★★★★	27	Freeserve	★★★★
3	Net Commun.	★★★★★	28	Free to You	★★★★
4	Powergen	★★★★★	29	Paradise Internet	★★★★
5	UUNet	★★★★★	30	Dabsol	★★★★
6	Cyberphile	★★★★★	31	Bun	★★★★
7	AngliaNet	★★★★★	32	Easynet	★★★★
8	Wireplay	★★★★★	33	Eidosnet	★★★★
9	Nildram	★★★★★	34	Go Free	★★★
10	BT Internet	★★★★★	35	Compuserve	★★★
11	Enterprise	★★★★★	36	Breathe	★★★
12	LineOne	★★★★★	37	AOL	★★★
13	Aviators Network	★★★★★	38	Virgin Net	★★★
14	Direct Connection	★★★★★	39	UK Online	★★★
15	Callnet	★★★★★	40	ClaraNet	★★★
16	London Web	★★★★★	41	X-Stream Network	★★★
17	Gateway 2000	★★★★★	42	Screaming.net	★★★
18	Sonnet Internet	★★★★★	43	Which? Online	★★
19	Freewire	★★★★★	44	Orbitalnet	★★
20	Free Internet	★★★★★	45	CIX	★★
21	This is it!	★★★★★	46	Cable and Wireless	★★
22	BT Click	★★★★	47	IC24	★★
23	Free Online	★★★★	48	Freezone	★★
24	Sniff Out	★★★★	49	Connect Free	★★
25	F9 Free	★★★★	50	UK Fantastic	★★

what service provider?

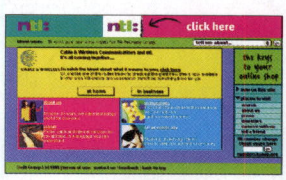
PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
0870 9090262	Unlimited	Channel based content with news, sport, weather	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 111210	5	News, shopping, sport, community etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	8-Midnight M-Sa
020 83494500	3	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	14.68	Standard	9-9 M-Sa
0870 5668008	20	A business oriented portal site	Yes	25Mb	0	14.95	National	24/7
01603 444444	4	None	No	20Mb	25.00	12.50	Local	Business hours
0800 0720460	Unlimited	Product and service information	Yes	25Mb	0	11.75	Local	8-9 (7 days)
01233 646505	5	None	Yes	5Mb	0	0	Local	Business hours
01256 414863	1	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	9.40	National/email	11-7 M-F
0870 6060653	5	Links to news, business and entertainment sites	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up at Tempo	Unlimited	Travel, entertainment, business, sport etc	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
01884 742510	Unlimited	Channel based layout with news, sport etc	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National	8-8 M-S
020 78912000	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	12.50	National	9-9 M-S
0906 9124000	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
01749 333333	1	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
08702 424220	12	None	No	50Mb	Call	Call	Call	9-8 M-F, 10-6 Sa
0500 558800	5	Several Virgin channels	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0645 830240	1	Online shopping and consumer affairs content	Yes	2Mb	11.75	14.75	Free	24/7
0845 757 7577	0	Games news, games chat, games add-ons	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	12pm-12 am, 7 days
0870 7306466	1	Chat, news, lifestyle, shopping, etc	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

ISP NEWS IN BRIEF
All the service provider news you need

'fish hooks ADSL



The company behind free ISP Madasafish has launched an unmetered ADSL service for business and home users. Iomart offers permanent 24-hour Net connection at a fixed monthly charge without usage-based connection or call charges. Installations are expected to start in August, with the set-up fee starting at £150 and a monthly payment of around £40.
www.iomart.com

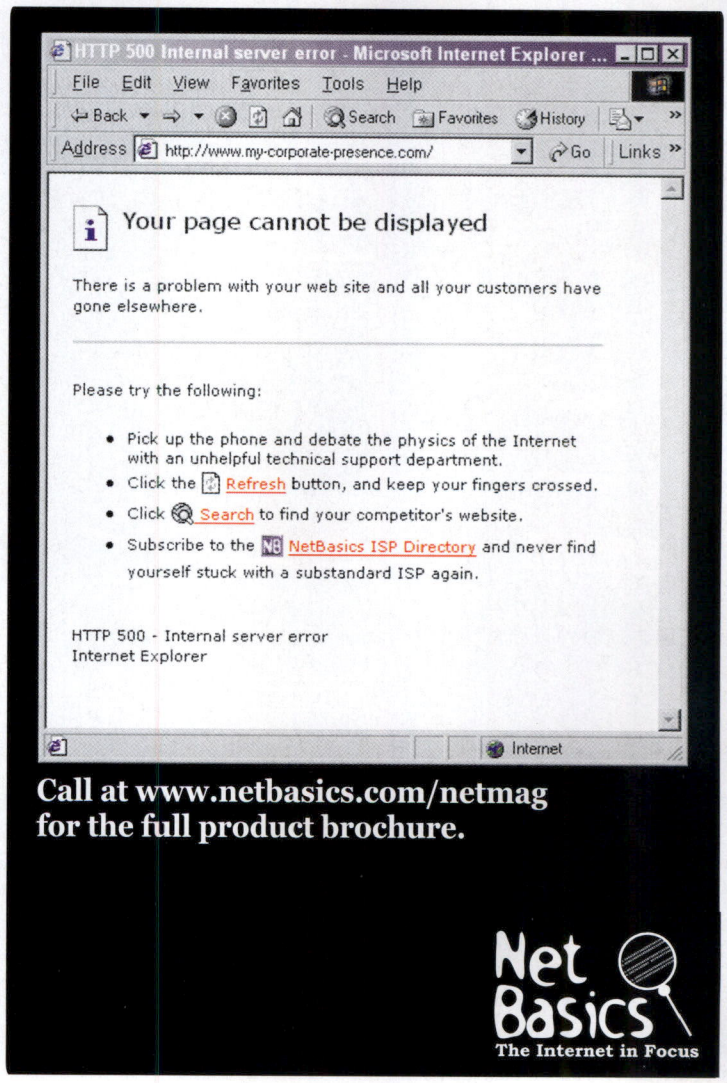


Naughty NTL gets told off

Confused by all those ISP ads promising the moon on a stick? You'll probably be glad to know that the Advertising Standards Authority is doing its job and acting on complaints, starting with an investigation into NTL's 'misleading' campaign, which the ASA claimed 'implied [free service] was available nationwide'. NTL has since withdrawn the campaign.
www.ntl.co.uk

Unmetered access... eventually

As we went to press last month we claimed that AltaVista's long-awaited £60-per-year unmetered access service, which tempted 500,000 users into signing up, was ready to launch. Unfortunately, AltaVista then announced it would only release log-on instructions to 2,000 new users at a time – leaving 498,000 customers still waiting to get connected.
www.altavista.co.uk



Call at www.netbasics.com/netmag for the full product brochure.

Net Basics
The Internet in Focus

PLAYERS ON

They've been burning the midnight oil in the MP3 factories to bring us a bunch

Diamond Rio500
£199.99 ★★★★★
www.dixons.co.uk
Packed with cool features, like a handy scroll function that eliminates half-a-dozen buttons, the Rio500 is a real winner. You'll need a USB port on your computer to transfer music and there's only 32Mb of flash memory, but for sound quality, build, great bundled software and sheer functionality this veteran model is unbeatable. Plus it works with a Mac. Hoorah!

DAP 96 Pro
£210 ★★★★
www.mp3player.co.uk
Not content with designing flat-pack furniture, those crazy Swedes have turned their arm to MP3 players – and the result is this little beauty. The matt black exterior conceals a whopping 96Mb of flash memory, and you can add more via 16 and 32Mb smart cards. The controls are as basic as the supplied software, but when it looks this good who cares?

Sony NW-MS7
£299.99 ★★★★
www.dixons.co.uk
Smaller than a Mars Bar, Sony's first foray into MP3 is based around Memory Stick technology – and it sounds great. You download music from your PC onto 64Mb smart cards, which will eventually play on all manner of Sony kit. That's all very well, but the in-built copyright protection means you have to 'check in' your tunes every three downloads. A pain – and it costs the MS Walkman that elusive fifth star.

Vivanco Vmax
£159 ★★★
www.mp3player.co.uk
MP3 players are solid state – no moving parts, with the music stored in memory chips. The Vmax is as small as they go: a match-box of a machine, there's no display, no internal memory – just download your files onto 32Mb media cards via USB, attach the belt clip and off you go. Fat-thumbed individuals be warned: you'll soon be cursing the tiny controls.

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM. PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, CHRIS RENNIE

PARADE

of spanking new players. How do the latest models square up to the old boys?

Hyper-Hyde
£199 ★★★
www.ionark.com
Another ridiculously small contender (only available via import), the Hyper-Hyde is little more than a box of chips built around a battery and a pair of 32Mb memory cards. Which means no LCD display; you simply cycle through your tracks. The manual's in Japanese, as is the installation CD, but if you want a player the size of a Dairylea triangle this is for you.

Maycom Merit MP-100F
£99.99 ★★★
www.dixons.co.uk
Like the Vmax and the Hyper-Hyde, this is another player without any internal memory, relying on 16Mb cards instead. Which means it's small and light – you can wear it round your neck if you dare – but the buttons are fiddly and you'll end up carrying a fistful of cards wherever you go. That said, it's a pleasing-looking thing, it's cheap, the sound quality is as good as any and there's a built-in FM radio.

Saehan MP-F20
£99.99 ★★★★
www.dixons.co.uk
The pick of the budget players, Saehan's funky black machine comes with 32Mb of in-built memory plus a slot for additional cards. The bundled software's no fun to use, the display is basic and the controls can be awkward to use. As an entry-level machine, however, it'll do just fine.

Thomson Lyra
£199.99 ★★
www.dixons.co.uk
The Lyra's been kicking around for a year or two and, compared to the sleek players elsewhere on this page, frankly it's a bit of an old carthorse. The player weighs a ton, there's no internal RAM, and press the 'eject' button and a 64Mb memory card shoots halfway across the room. Nice headphones, though.

JUKEBOX JURY

HanGo Personal Jukebox 4.8Gb £549 ★★★★★ *www.pjbox.co.uk*
That's right: the HanGo comes with *4.8Gb* of memory. That's 500 times more than any other player on these pages and translates to about 80 hours of MP3 music, with a 6Gb version also available. At the heart of the Personal Jukebox is a big old hard disk, not a memory chip... which means it's not cheap, it's twice the size of the biggest solid-state player and there's a risk of tracks jumping if you bash it around too much. But load a CD into your computer, create MP3s of tracks on the fly as you stream them to the HanGo via USB, slip on the terrific Koss headphones and just listen to the quality! Magnificent.

What have the kids downloaded today?

Can't monitor their surfing habits all the time? Help is at hand – we take a look at 'net nanny' software

IT'S ABOUT A YEAR SINCE WE LAST looked at the issue of 'net nannies' – programs designed to protect your kids from any potentially harmful material they find on the Internet. However, recent news reports have shown that the safety of children on the Internet is still an important concern for parents. In fact, it's something that's going to become even more important as more and more kids gain access to the Net – either through school or at home.

And it's not just dirty pictures or porn sites that you need to worry about, either. One of the big changes over the last year has been the massive popularity of 'instant messaging' software. Online chatting is extremely popular with young teenagers, but recent news reports about adults contacting children and attempting to meet have underlined the risks of chatrooms and messaging programs.

The market research outfit, National Opinion Polls (NOP), conducted a survey of kids' surfing habits last year and found that 40 percent of under-16s had come across something 'rude' or upsetting on the Internet. Extrapolating that figure nationally, NOP claims that this amounts to almost one million kids accidentally stumbling across something potentially harmful.

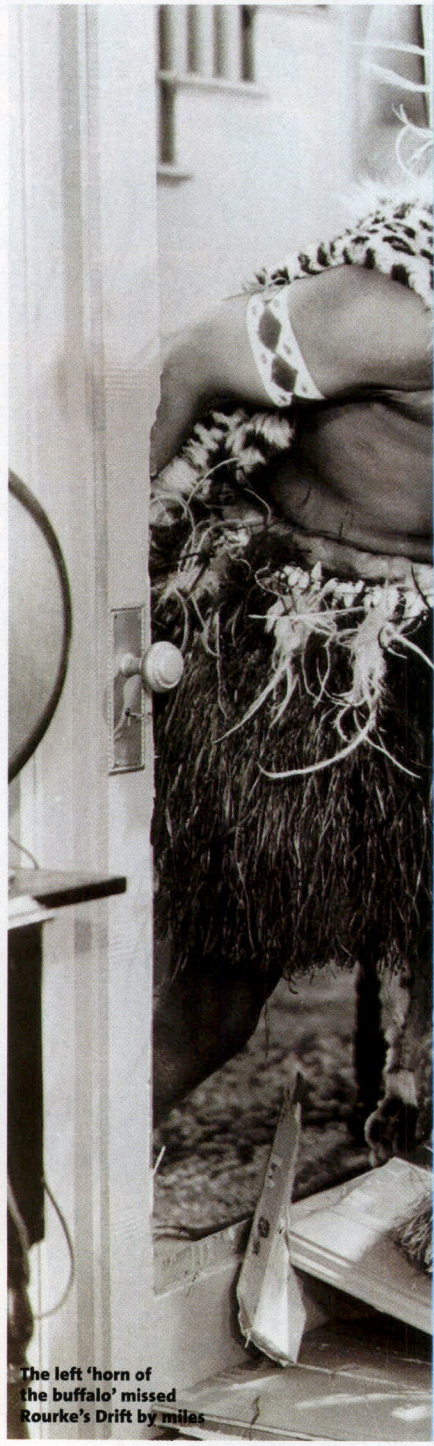
Now, we've said it before and we'll say it again: you can't rely on a piece of software to protect your kids for you. There really is no substitute for spending time with your kids and watching what they get up to when they're online. But before you pull the plug on your PC altogether, there are several things you can do to minimise the risks...

WHERE TO START?

Firstly, we'd recommend that any concerned parent looks at *The Guardian*'s online NetClass, which has a section especially for parents (go to ***www.educationunlimited.co.uk*** then click on the link for NetClass). It covers general parenting issues such as bullying at school and homework help, but also has a comprehensive section on nanny programs and tips to ensure your kids' safety online.

Next, take a look at the way your PC is set up. Don't let really young kids have a PC with an Internet connection in their bedroom. Keep the family computer out in the open, in the front room – that way you can glance over every now and then just to see what's going on, without having to look over the little perishers' shoulders the whole time.

Older teenagers may want a bit more privacy, of course, and their rampaging hormones will make them curious about some of the darker nooks and crannies on the



The left 'horn of the buffalo' missed Rourke's Drift by miles

KIDS' BROWSERS

One alternative to a straightforward net nanny program is to use a browser designed specially for kids. Our favourite is Surf Monkey, which has a colourful interface and its own animated character who bounces around the screen and acts as a guide for younger kids new to Web-surfing. The browser has its own built-in list of banned sites, words and phrases, and can also block email and chat messages. If you want, you can just download the Surf Monkey character along with a simple toolbar and use these to add content-filtering features to an off-the-shelf copy of Internet Explorer. The Surf Monkey Web site also has lots of good content aimed at young kids, including chatrooms and online projects such as its video and sound studios.

Other browsers designed for kids include ChiBrow and Surfing Annette (at spycatcher.com). They're fine, but Surf Monkey's browser and child-friendly site means it offers the best all-round package for safe surfing.

- ***www.childrenbrowser.com***
- ***www.spycatcher.com***
- ***www.surfmonkey.com***

childrenbrowser.com: one option for kids...

...but Surf Monkey offers the best all-round package

Internet. But there are still steps you can take to give yourself some peace of mind. Your first line of protection is your choice of ISP. Some of the larger ISPs, such as AOL and Freeserve, provide parental control software that allows you to restrict your child's surfing. As part of your subscription you can set up special kids' accounts that will limit their freedom to roam certain areas of the Internet, and limit access to email, newsgroups and chatrooms.

Free ISPs are tempting from a financial point of view, but it might be worth stumping up for a subscription-based ISP, such as AOL, in order to protect your kids. AOL has a lot of material designed for children, including games and chat-rooms monitored by adults. Much of this content is stored on AOL's private computer network and kept separate from the rest of the Internet. Parents can then set up the AOL software so that it only gives access to AOL's approved content.

One recent addition to the list of free ISPs is KZuk (***www.kzuk.net***). This is an ISP designed specifically for kids aged between four and 12. Like AOL, KZuk has lots of kid-oriented content, including chatrooms, online magazines, games, and homework advice. Parents can use the KZuk software to limit their kids to this material, while still being free to surf the rest of the Net themselves.

NET NANNIES

When you eventually step out online, your next line of protection is your Web browser. It's often over-looked but most Web browsers, including both Explorer and Communicator, have 'content rating' systems built into them. The main one is RSACI – Recreational Software Advisory Council for the Internet. This allows you to set acceptable levels for four different types of content – sex, nudity, language and violence. So you could decide that pictures of a clothed couple kissing are acceptable, but that you want to ban outright nudity.

The only problem here is that the RSACI system is voluntary – it relies on Webmasters to take part in the system and rate the content of their own sites. Many responsible 'adult' sites do this because it's in their own best interest to stay legal, but if the owner of a site decides not to take part then these ratings are useless.

This is where 'net nanny' programs come in. Sometimes known as 'content filters' or 'blocking

1000 cinema tickets up for grabs!

We've teamed up with ipoints.co.uk, the UK's largest Internet rewards scheme, to give away 1000 UCI cinema tickets. If you're one of the first 1000 readers of *the net* to register at *www.ipoints.co.uk/uci* you'll receive a ticket valid at any UCI cinema* for any movie, any time in the next nine months!

Just like the rewards programmes in your local supermarket, become a member and you'll start earning ipoints when you shop online with any of their partners – which include e-tailers like bol.com, egg.com and 101CD.com.

Almost anything you want to buy online can earn you ipoints. Then, when you have enough, you can redeem them for any of the products in the rewards catalogue. Rewards start from as low as 10 ipoints up to a maximum of 11,740, and with 15 different reward categories and over two million different rewards items, you're bound to find something you like!

And don't worry if you don't do too much shopping online, because all sorts of other activities can generate ipoints. Completing surveys, referring friends, even simply becoming a member all earn you ipoints!

So how do I get my hands on a free ticket?

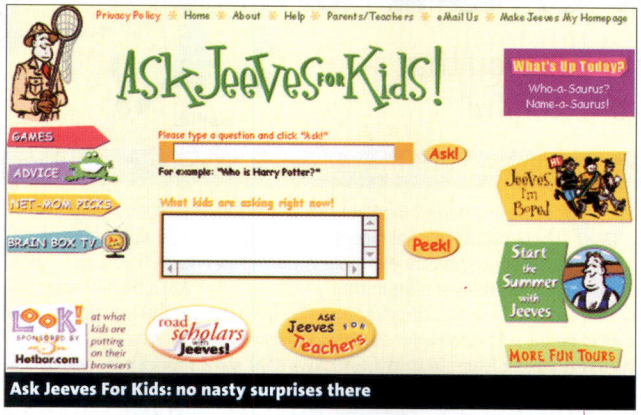
Visit www.ipoints.co.uk/uci, fill in the details, putting 'thenet01' in the box which asks who introduced you. If you're one of the first 1000 readers to join up, you'll be sent a UCI cinema ticket voucher, so don't forget to leave your full name and address at the ipoints site.

www.ipoints.co.uk

You shop. We reward

Closing date for entries is September 20, 2000, or until the 1000th ticket has been allocated, whichever is the soonest. Entrants must be resident in the UK and entries are limited to two per household. The first 1000 people who visit www.ipoints.co.uk/uci from 9am on August 9 and log on with their name, address details and 'thenet01' code will receive a UCI cinema ticket. *The ticket will be valid for approximately nine months and excludes the UCIs at Leicester Square and the 'Gallery' area of Norwich and Maidenhead. No cash alternative or substitute prizes will be allowed. The competition organisers reserve the right to supply a prize of similar value and specification if the named prize is unavailable. The decision of the organisers is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Information on the winners of the competition will be available within two weeks of the published closing date and will be supplied upon receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope.

SAFE SEARCHING



Ask Jeeves For Kids: no nasty surprises there

One of the main ways that kids can accidentally stumble on dubious material on the Net is when search engines throw up unexpected links as a result of a search for a completely unrelated topic. Suppose your kids use a search engine to find out about the forthcoming *X-Men* film – they could all too easily come up with a lot of 'x-rated' material.

UK Plus: families option

Luckily, though, there are a number of search engines specially designed for younger users. The UK Plus search engine has a 'Safe For Families' option, while AltaVista offers a 'family filter'. What happens is that the search engine performs its normal job, but then runs its list of results through a filter that eliminates sites that aren't suitable for children. The only problem with these filters is that you can turn them on or off with a single click of your mouse, so it's not hard for your little scamps to get around them.

A better alternative is to use a search engine such as Ask Jeeves For Kids, a childrens' version of the main Ask Jeeves search engine. If you bookmark this and make it your main search engine you're less likely to be surprised by the links that come up when you're searching the Net.

- ALTAVISTA *www.altavista.com*
- ASK JEEVES FOR KIDS *www.ajkids.com*
- UK PLUS *www.ukplus.co.uk*

software', there are more than a dozen nanny programs available, and most offer a demo version you can download free of charge. Perhaps the most well-known is CyberPatrol, which generally gets the highest scores when reviewed by magazines and newspapers. It has certainly come out tops when we've tested nanny programs in the past. However, other popular nanny programs include SafeSurf, Cyber-Sitter and, of course, Net Nanny, which first gave us the term.

Once you've installed these programs they run quietly in the background whenever you're connected to the Internet. They watch what's going on with Web browsers and other programs, such as emails, then leap in when they detect something dodgy.

Most nanny programs provide a number of safe-surfing features, but the main one they all rely on is a built-in list of banned sites. The companies that develop these programs compile their own lists of sites they consider unsuitable for kids to access, and the nanny program will automatically block access to them. New Web sites are springing up all the time, so the software companies produce updates that can automatically be downloaded into the nanny program to keep it current. You may need to pay for the program in order to receive these updates, though – one of the incentives used to get you to cough up for the paid-for version as opposed to the demo.

But, controversially, the people who compile these lists of banned sites impose their own prejudices when deciding what's 'unsuitable'. CyberPatrol, in the past, has blocked access to Web sites such as the *Journal Of The American Medical Association* because it contains information about AIDS and HIV. The Ontario Centre for Religious Tolerance, the Feminist Majority Foundation and the Envirolink environmental database are among other sites that have been blocked by various nanny programs. It's not stretching things too far to suggest that there's a bit of reactionary paranoia being exhibited here.

THE FORBIDDEN WORDS

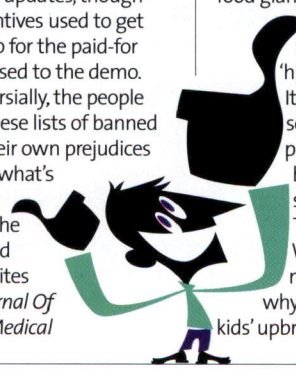
Another option used by many nanny programs is to include a list of banned words. The program will have a list of words such as 'tits' and 'bums' and will automatically block any Web pages that contain those words. Word lists aren't totally reliable, though: you might find that a Web site about 'Mars exploration' is blocked because it contains the letters 'ars e', while a page with dirty pictures and no text at all will get through without a problem.

However, lists of banned words can come in useful if the nanny program allows them to be applied to email, newsgroups and chat messages. This will prevent any messages containing these words from getting through. Not all programs do this, however.

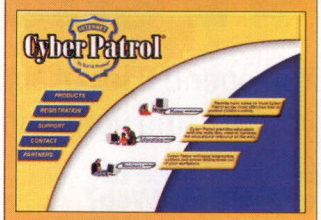
THE PHRASE 'A JUICY WHOPPER' TOOK ON A WHOLE NEW MEANING

Surfwatch checks Web pages for banned words, but it doesn't check email, newsgroups or chat rooms; Cyberpatrol will check for banned words in messages but not emails. And some require you to enter your own list of banned words, which can be time-consuming, so take a look at demo versions of some of these programs to see which one you like best.

The biggest problem with any nanny program, though, is the fact that a smart kid can get around most of them (younger kids will be too busy downloading Pokémon rubbish to think about it). Take the recent Burger King fiasco: the fast-food giant was giving away CD-ROMs containing nanny software, which relied on a 'hidden' list of banned sites. It only took minutes for some kids to disable the program and open up the banned list – providing a selection of dodgy sites. The phrase 'a juicy Whopper' took on a whole new meaning... and that's why you shouldn't trust your kids' upbringing to a bit of software.

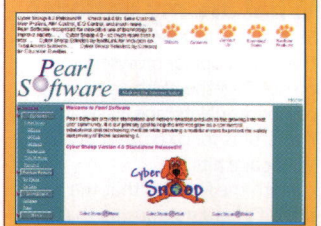


THOSE NET NANNIES



- CYBERPATROL *www.cyberpatrol.co.uk*

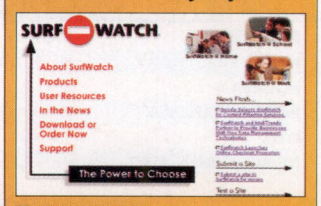
- CYBERSITTER *www.solidoak.com*



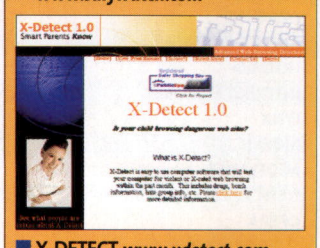
- CYBERSNOOP *www.pearlsw.com*

- NET NANNY *www.netnanny.co.uk*

- SAFESURF *www.safesurf.com*



- SURFWATCH *www.surfwatch.com*



- X-DETECT *www.xdetect.com*

WORDS: CLIFF JOSEPH; PICTURE: KOBAL COLLECTION

Web browsers

You spend a lot of time looking through it, so make sure you that you're using your window on the World Wide Web to the full

What do I use to explore the Web?

The software you use to look at pages on the Web is called a 'browser'. The most popular are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you have a PC running Windows 95 or 98, you will almost certainly have Internet Explorer already installed. However, Navigator and other browsers such as Opera run in much the same way.

What are my options?

Statistically, Internet Explorer is the most popular browser on the planet. Together with its nearest competitor, Netscape Navigator, it accounts for 97 percent of all Web page hits.

With the facilities that the two offer, it's hardly surprising that they rule the roost. Internet Explorer 5.0 is the current leader of the Internet pack. It's packed – jam-packed, in fact – with features.

Netscape Navigator 4.08 represents the only serious competition to Internet Explorer. But it still can't reach the dizzying heights of IE – in fact it's slipped so much in popularity that Web site designers now often make sure their pages look right in IE alone.

You would've thought that with the market pretty much sewn up between the big two, no-one would be foolhardy enough to attempt to write a rival browser – but there are others. Opera, for example, is a tiny little thing at 1.5Mb (compared with Netscape Communicator's 10Mb+). It's fast, but it's let down by an ugly appearance. The Opera equivalent for Macs is iCab. It has many of the excellent features of Opera, but it looks and works even better.

If you want a real rebel browser, try Lynx. It's text only, so it cuts down on download times. For children (or adults who are kids at heart), there's Surf Monkey, which lets you blow up Web pages you don't like, or gloop green paint all over them.

Saving sites in Internet Explorer

Typing in the name of a Web site every time you want to visit it can be a pain – especially if it's a long and complex name. Fortunately, all Web browsers have a way of saving the locations of sites you like, so you can revisit them without needing to retype them. In Internet Explorer these saved site addresses are called Favourites, while Netscape Navigator calls them Bookmarks.

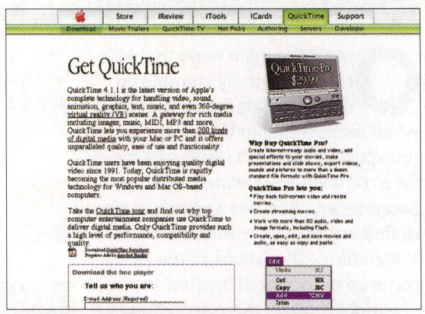
1 From the Favourites menu, choose 'Add to Favourite.' The keyboard shortcut for the move is Control D.

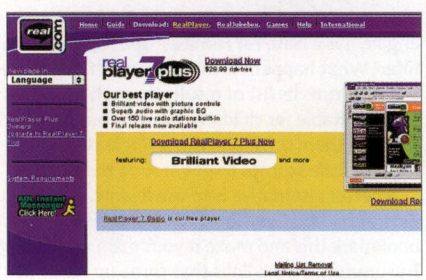
2 When asked whether you want to subscribe to the site, choose the 'No, just add this page to my Favourites' option. You'll see the title of the page in the 'Name' section of the site; if this is not descriptive enough for you, type a five- or six-word description of the site. Then hit OK.

3 You will now find that the site has been added to your Favourites menu. To visit the site, just click 'Favourites' and then go to the menu list and select it.

Supercharge your browser

Your basic Internet Explorer set-up comes with several 'plug-ins'. These are additional pieces of software which enable your browser to play, for example, multimedia effects. If you arrive at a site requiring a plug-in that you don't have, you'll be prompted to download and install it. The plug-ins you'll need to get the most from your browsing include: RealPlayer at ***www.real.com*** (bottom), which lets you watch videos or listen to music; Shockwave at ***www.shockwave.com*** for animation and sound; and Apple's QuickTime (below) at ***www.apple.com/quicktime/***, which plays video and sound.





Installing a plug-in

1 When you require a plug-in, a prompt appears. Click 'Get Plug-in' and you'll go to the plug-in's home page.

2 Click on the link where you can 'Get' or 'Download' the plug-in.

3 Explorer will put the plug-in inside the correct folder on your PC.

4 Go back to the site by pressing the Back button on the Explorer toolbar and enjoy it in its full glory.

Browser alternatives

Proof that there's more to browsing than Explorer or Netscape

MAC BROWSERS

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
ICAB	★★★★	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	www.icab.de
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow; somewhat unstable	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	www.microsoft.com/Mac/IE/
LYNX	★★★★	Blazingly fast at fact-finding	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	www.lirmm.fr/~gutkneco/maclynx/
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★	It's almost as good as IE...	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com

PC BROWSERS

AMAYA	★★	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html
ARACHNE	★★	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	arachne.cz
CUSTOM BROWSER	★	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	www.custombrowser.com
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	www.microsoft.com
LYNX	★★★★	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	lynx.browser.org
MOSAIC	★★★	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w/
NEOPLANET	★★★★	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	www.neoplanet.com
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★★	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com
OPERA	★★★★	Faster than IE or Netscape	Looks absolutely horrible	www.opera.com
SURF MONKEY	★★★★★	Lots of fun – blowing up sites is great	Designed for smaller screens?	www.surfmonkey.com

*free 30-day trial version available

What all those browser buttons mean

Understanding the toolbar

BACK Clicking this button takes you back to the last page. Click it once and you'll go back one page, or hold to see the last 10

STOP If you decide that you don't want to view a page while it's loading, just hit Stop

HOME This button takes you to the page you viewed when you started your browser

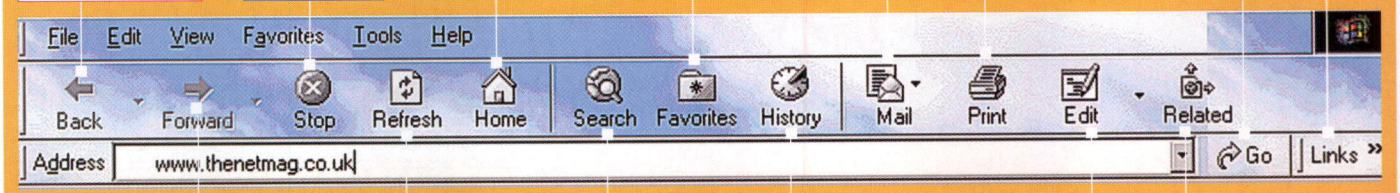
FAVOURITES Pop-up window containing a list of your Favourite sites – or you can view them from the menu

MAIL Opens your email program

PRINT Prints the page

GO When you've entered an address, hit Enter or click here to go to the site

LINKS A quick shortcut to some of your favourite sites, which you can add to



FORWARD If you've used the Back button to move back a page or two, the Forward button should take you back again

REFRESH This makes the browser redraw the page on the screen – useful if you have stopped a page from loading

SEARCH This button opens Internet Explorer's search options where you'll find short-cuts to finding what you want on the Internet

HISTORY Clicking this button produces a list of all the sites visited over the past few days or weeks – so if you found a really useful page two days ago but forgot to add it to your Favourites list, you can easily find it again by looking here

EDIT If you have a Web page editor, you can edit a Web page by clicking here

RELATED SITES Launches the Explorer 'Alexa' plug-in which provides extra search options

Viewing your browser

1 **TITLE BAR** Tells you the name of the site you're visiting and the program you're currently using

2 **MENU BAR** The range of options you can use while navigating the Internet

3 **IF ! OGO** Contains a link to the IE home page, in case you're lost

4 **ADDRESS** The address of the site you're opening, including the http:// prefix

5 **GO BUTTON** Click to go to the address you've typed in (or hit the Return key)

6 **WEB SITE WINDOW** The whole page you're opening

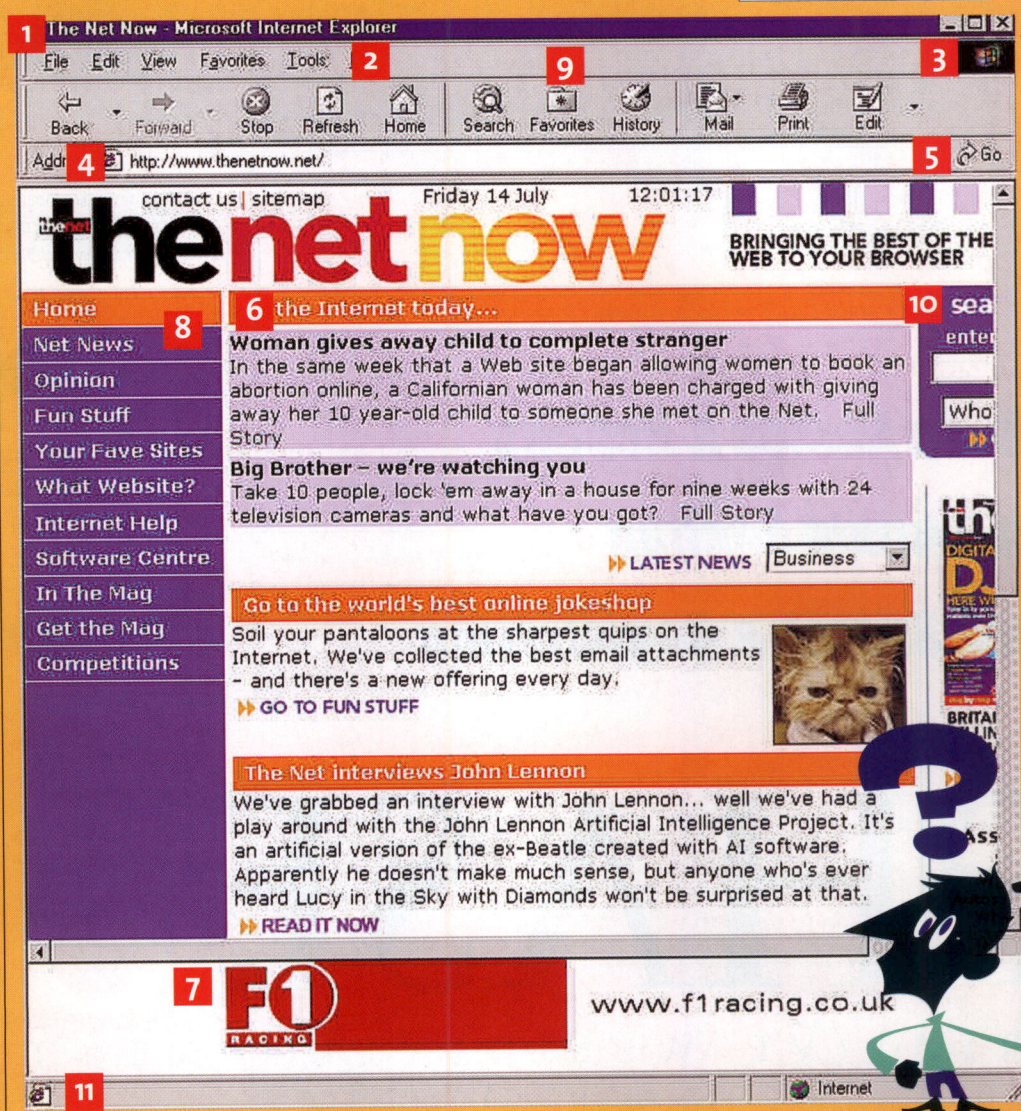
7 **BANNER ADVERTISEMENT** Click here to visit the service advertised in this small banner

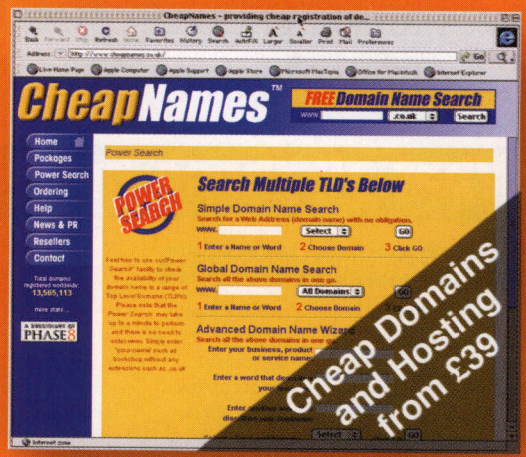
8 **INDEX** What you'll find on the site. Click on an option to enter it

9 **FAVOURITES** Or Bookmarks in Netscape. This is where you can store the addresses of your most often visited Web sites

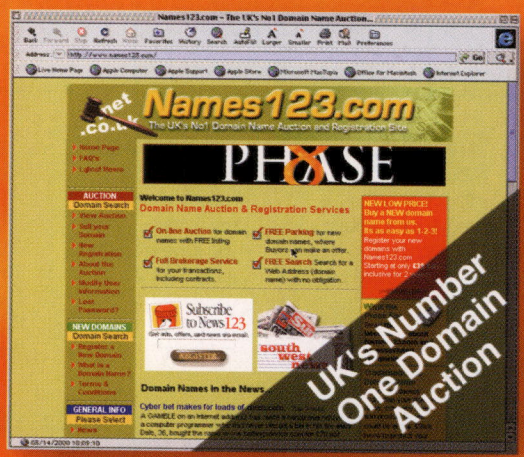
10 **SEARCH** Will find something specific on the site for you

11 **DOWNLOAD DATA** This space tells you what Explorer is doing – or which site it could open when your cursor passes over a link





www.cheapnames.co.uk



www.names123.com

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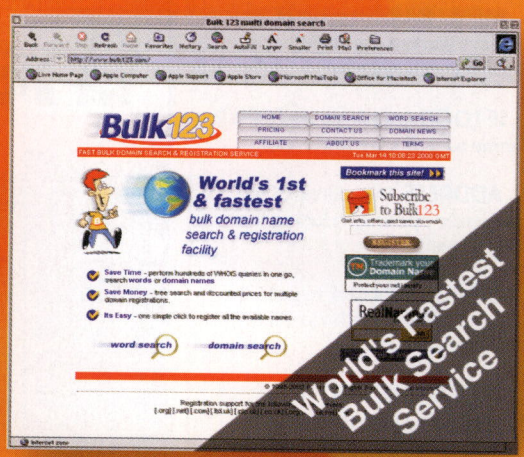

www.bulk123.com

PHASE 8

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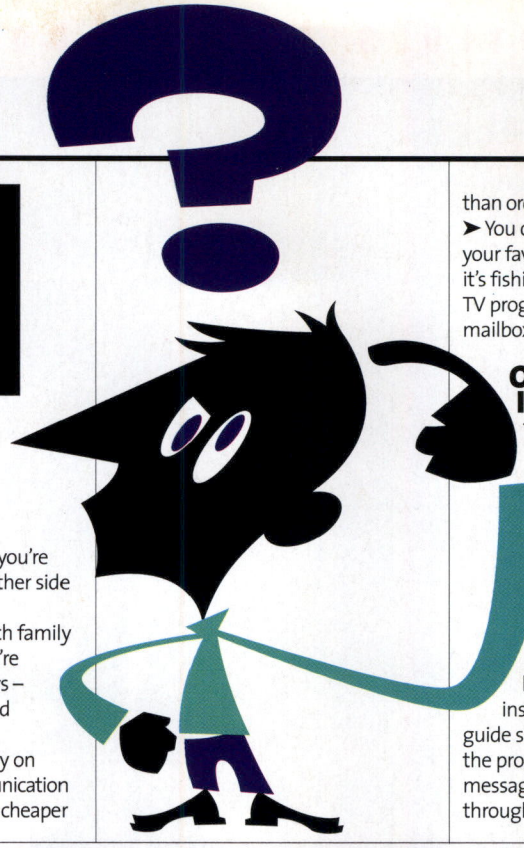
Email

Still not set-up your email software? Here's how to use Outlook Express



What is email?

Email is a way of sending messages around the Internet. While early programs could only handle plain text, most can now carry pictures and even video clips and sound.

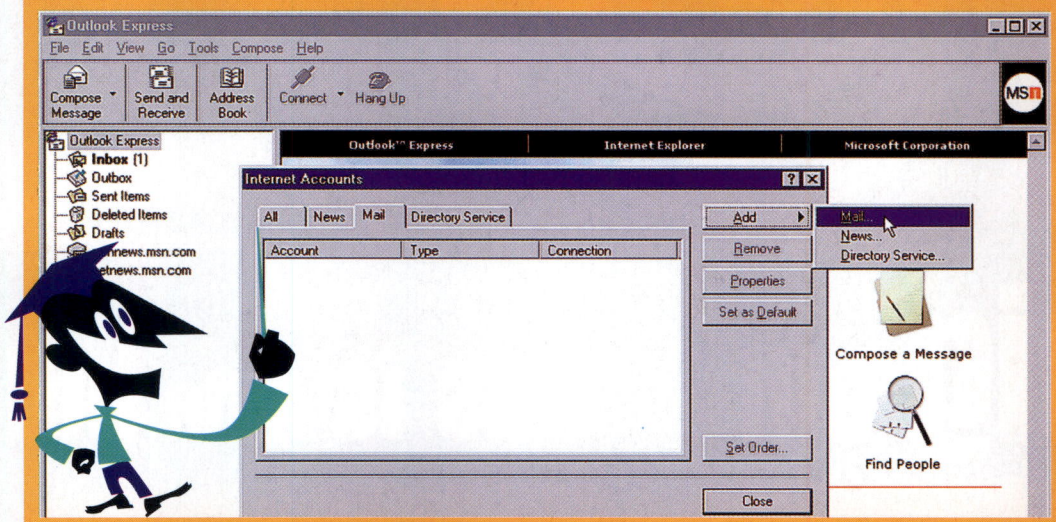
So why should I use it?

➤ It's a lot cheaper to email a friend than to phone them long distance.
➤ It's delivered almost instantly – there's no seven-day wait if you're emailing someone on the other side of the globe.
➤ You can keep in touch with family and friends, even while they're away on business or holidays – they can visit a cybercafé and check their mail from there.
➤ Many companies now rely on email as a means of communication because it's much faster and cheaper than ordinary or 'snail mail'.
➤ You can have information on your favourite subjects – whether it's fishing, the stock market, or a TV programme – delivered to your mailbox every day.

Okay, so how do I use it?

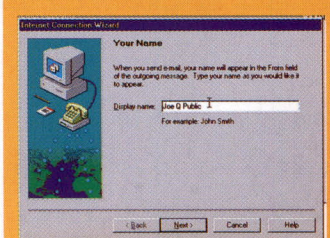
There are lots of email packages, but the one most widely used is Microsoft's Outlook Express. If you've bought a PC in the last two or three years, or you've downloaded Microsoft Internet Explorer for either Mac or PC, you'll already have Outlook Express installed. Our step-by-step guide shows you how to configure the program, create an email message, send it, and then read through the mail you've been sent. ▶

1 Getting started with Outlook Express

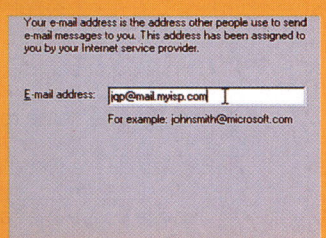


1 From the Start menu on your desktop, click Programs and then Outlook Express. If you are asked where you want it to store messages, select the pre-set or 'default' folder. The folder is kept in the Program Files folder on your hard drive.

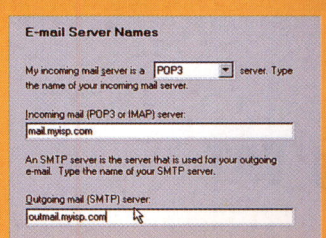
2 Once Outlook Express has loaded, go to the Accounts box from the Tools menu, and click the Mail tab shown in the picture on the left. This will show you any mail accounts you already have set up, and allows you to create a new one. For the purposes of this exercise we are going to create a new email account. Next, click Add, and select Mail.



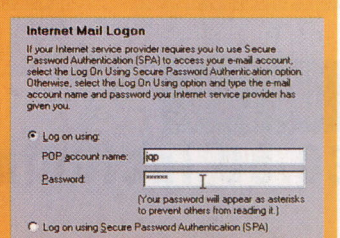
3 The Internet Connection Wizard will now guide you through the steps you need to take. First, enter your full name.



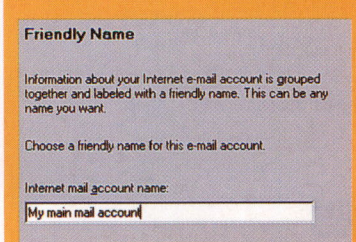
4 Type in your email address. This will have been given to you by your Internet service provider or ISP.



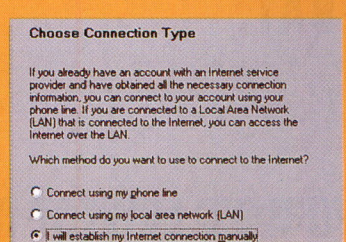
5 Enter the names of the email POP3/IMAP server in order to get incoming and outgoing mail. Call your ISP's helpline if you're unsure.



6 Type in your email address – just the part before the '@' sign – and your password. Again, your ISP should have given you these details.



7 Outlook Express asks for a 'friendly name' to give to your email account. We've called ours 'My main email account' for simplicity.



8 Outlook Express can automatically dial into your ISP for you, but it's probably best to connect manually. You can use Outlook offline, writing and managing your mail and then connect in order to send and receive messages. Choose the 'I will establish my Internet connection manually' option.

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- ★ Creating an email address book
- ★ Email etiquette
- ★ Filtering your email messages
- ★ Sending pictures and files via email

BEGINNER'S TIP

Add a 'signature' to your messages. A signature is like a calling card appended to the bottom of your email message. It might contain your email address, full name and phone number. To make one, go to the Tools menu in Outlook Express, choose Options and select Stationery and click on the Signature button. Type in the signature text you want to appear at the bottom of each message.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Often, you'll want to pass a file to someone as part of your email message. This is known as 'attaching' the file, and is supported by most email packages. Remember that a large file will take longer to send. Compressing it using a shareware package like WinZip on the PC will shrink it, but the receiver the file will need a copy of the same program to re-expand it – so check before you send.

ADVANCED TIP

You can set up several different email accounts. Outlook Express will check each one for new mail when you go online. This is useful if you have separate work and personal email accounts. To add extra accounts, go to the Tools menu, select Options and click on New Account. Go through the 'Getting Started' steps again below, entering the new settings.

EMAIL OPTIONS If you don't want to use Outlook Express, try these alternatives for size

EUDORA LIGHT

www.eudora.com

A very popular, free email package. Includes lots of great features. Doesn't support reading news-groups, but copes happily with 'rich content email' – mail that includes sound, images and so on.

✔ **Lots of features**

✘ **None**

HOTMAIL

www.hotmail.com

A Web-based email program. Gives you a free email address, and can be accessed from any computer with a Web browser. Can also check email from a non-Web-based account.

✔ **Accessed from any computer**

✘ **You need to be online to read or compose mail**

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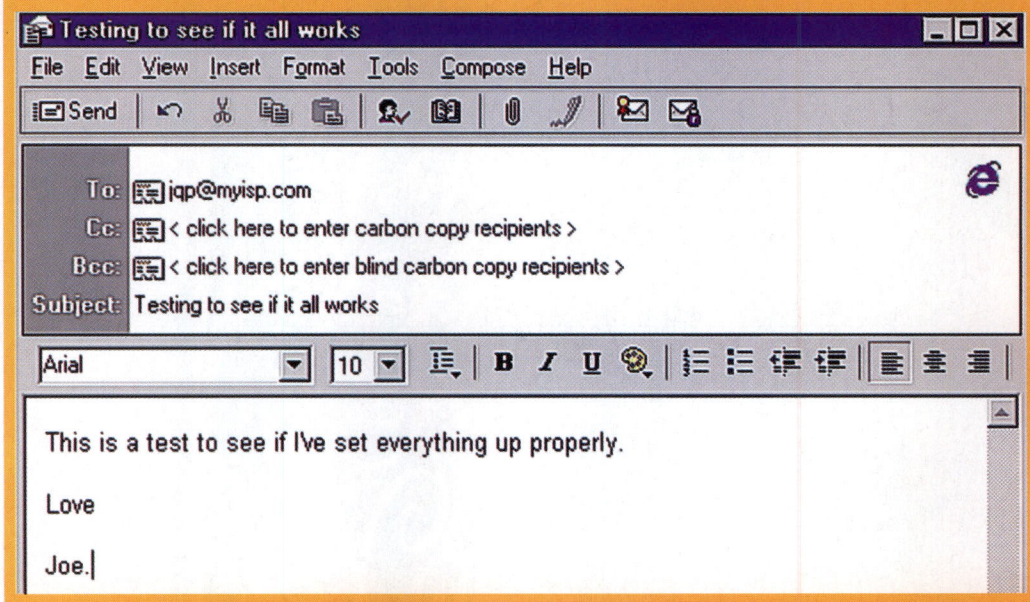
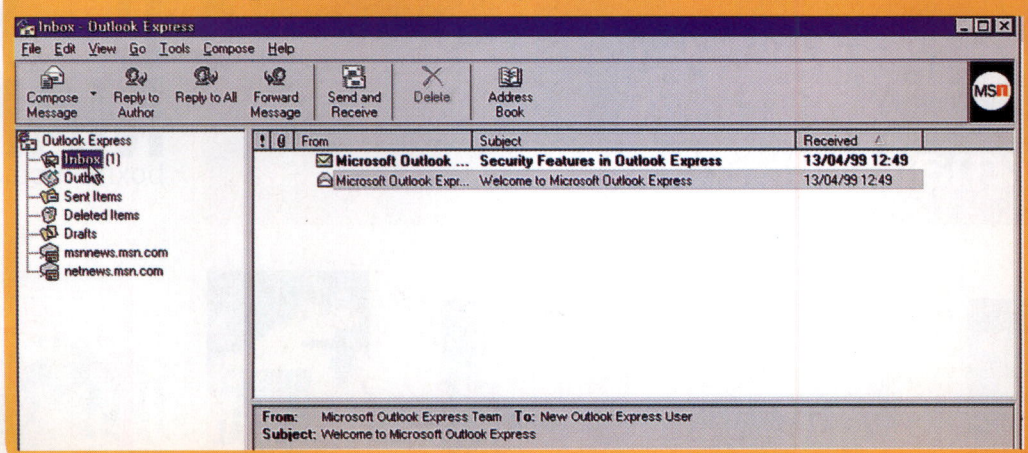
2 Composing your first email message



COMPOSING A MESSAGE

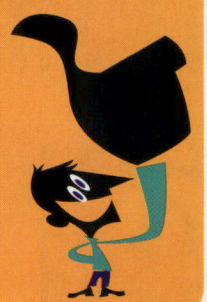
To create a message, click 'Compose Message'. If you click the small arrow just to the right, you will see that there are several pre-defined graphic message templates. But for now, just click on the button itself. Type your own email address in the 'To' field – you'll send an email to yourself to check that everything is working correctly. Enter a subject, for example 'Test Message', and in the body area just type a short message. From the File menu you can click Send to send your message now if you're online. Alternatively, if you're working offline click Send Later. This allows you to create more messages and have them ready for sending when you're ready to log on to the Net.

3 Sending, receiving & reading email



SENDING & RECEIVING MAIL

To send and receive mail, connect to the Net, then click the Send and Receive button. This will check for mail and download any new messages, at the same time sending any outgoing messages you have created. Once the program has stopped receiving mail, you can disconnect from the Net if you wish, to save phone costs. Click on In Box to the left of the screen to access the messages you have received. Click on the message to read its contents.



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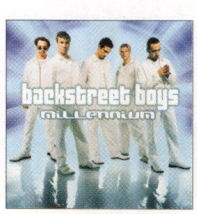

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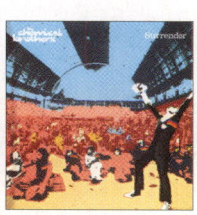

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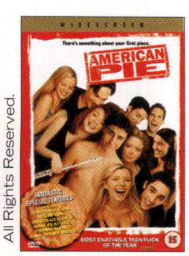

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- ★ Sending your first message
- ★ Newsgroup etiquette
- ★ Members-only bulletin boards
- ★ Web forums

Newsgroups

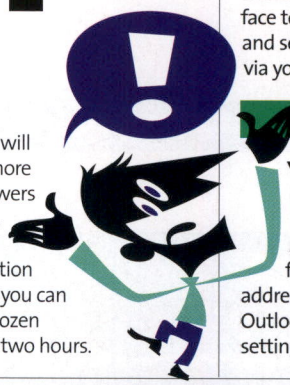
Whatever your pet subject, they'll be a newsgroup dedicated to it on the Internet. Here's how to join it

What is a newsgroup?

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests – whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or book-keeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

Why should I use newsgroups?

Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups will often have more detailed answers to questions. If you have a specific question on a subject, you can have half a dozen responses in two hours.



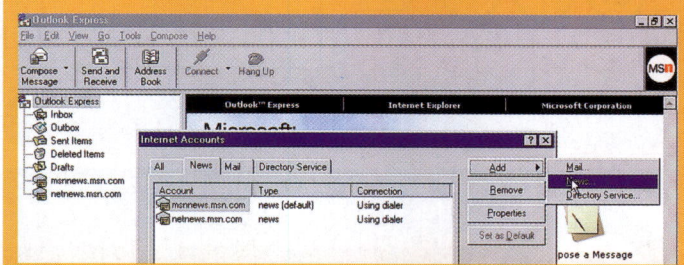
BEGINNER'S TIP

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews ***www.deja.com*** – a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

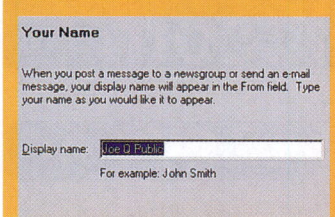
ADVANCED TIP

Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access. Mick's Place at ***web.ukonline.co.uk/mick.sz/*** has over 50 free access news server addresses. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting up steps outlined below.

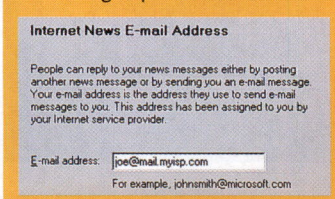
Accessing newsgroups using Outlook Express



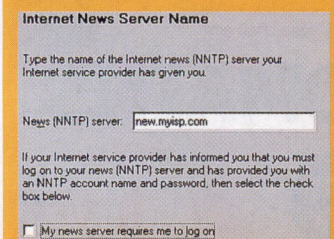
1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.



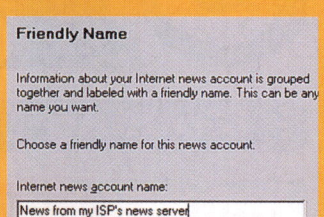
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.



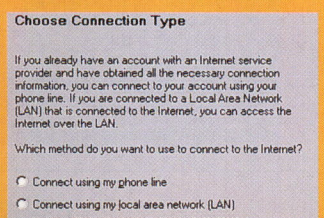
3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.



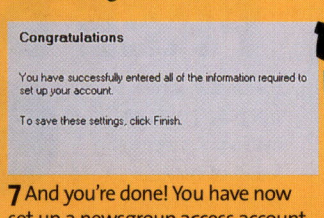
4 Enter the name of your ISP's server which should be given in your user documentation.



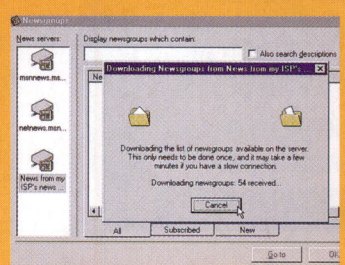
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.



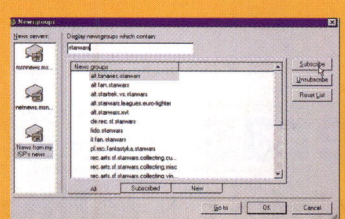
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.



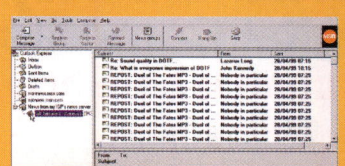
7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.



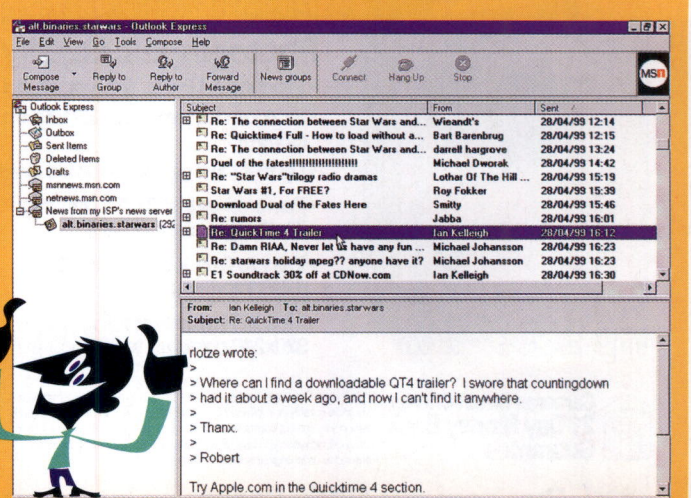
8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded – so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect to your news server because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want.



10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the header and the whole message downloads, appearing on the lower half of the screen.



11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies to this message which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to list the replies.

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PEDRO DE LA ROSA

When the Spanish F1 driver isn't using his laptop to play Spanish pop, he's on the Net

When did you first start to use the Internet?
In 1996. When I raced in Japan I began to use email to keep in touch with my family, friends and my manager and to be in touch with motor racing and news in general. It was a way to save on telephone bills and also fill spare time – something that I had a lot of when living in Japan.

What's the first thing you do when you go online?
I normally check my email first. Then it depends if I am at home or abroad. If I am at home, I go to Web sites I am interested in and look for motor racing news. If I am abroad I go to my country's newspapers' sites.

Do you use the Internet to check up on how other drivers are performing in testing?
Not really. If I am not at the track where testing takes place, I normally have direct information via my team, Orange Arrows. But yes, if I have some spare time, I may take a look at what happened at other places.

How much involvement do you have in your official site at *www.pedrodelarosa.com*?
I have a team of people who do a very good job of doing the Web site. I often visit the studio where it is put together; we're very close, so they know me well. They often ask my opinion and I really feel it is my personal Web site.

The Arrows Web site reveals that you like Spanish pop music. Do you ever download any from the Net to remind you of home?
To be frank, I have never done it. I normally carry some CDs with me and, if I feel like listening to music, my laptop has a player.

David Coulthard recently got into hot water over the gestures he made to Michael Schumacher. Have you ever done anything like that to a driver who has annoyed you?
To react like this may distract you and cause you to lose concentration. I never do it.

You can buy a ride in a supersonic jet fighter plane over the Internet. Do you fancy a go and would you be scared?
Why not? I am not really attracted by planes but it must be very exciting and challenging. Apart from driving a Formula One car, this must be one of the most challenging things to do in life. If somebody invites me for a ride in a jet fighter I would probably accept it right away.

What's the best thing about the Internet in your opinion?
The open access to almost everything, wherever you are. You only need a phone line, a laptop, and a little bit of time. If you have these you have all you need. It is good entertainment too.

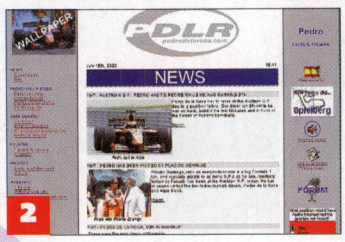
Do you use email to keep in touch with people while you're travelling?
Yes. If it wasn't for Internet I would have lost contact with many friends. I have been living abroad for seven years. Now I travel over 200 days a year. In these days, the Internet is a basic requirement for a traveller, to stay in touch with their interests.

What's your favourite colour car?
Dark blue, white, ... Now I like the 'orange'. Guess why !

With thanks to Eurobet.co.uk

PICTURE: LAT PHOTOGRAPHIC

PEDROS' BEST OF THE WEB



1 ARROWS
www.arrows.com
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2 PEDRO DE LA ROSA
www.pedrodelarosa.com
Keep up with all the latest developments in the Spaniard's career on his own Web site, delivered in Spanish and English.

3 MARCA
www.marca.es
Pedro's favourite Spanish newspaper is online so he can always keep in touch with his homeland.

4 EUROBET
www.eurobet.co.uk
Where better to find out whether the bookmakers think he's in with a chance of winning the next race?

5 ITV-F1
www.itv-f1.com
When Pedro needs to keep tabs on competitors, this F1 news site keeps him up-to-speed.

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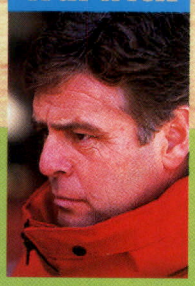
Big Ron Atkinson's top tips for a footy flutter on firststake.com

Warwick



Derek & Jiffy

give you the inside track on the hot news in F1 and rugby

Davies

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FLAT HUNTING

The Rothmans Royals St Leger is the last classic flat race of the season before they put those annoying fences up for the winter, and all the big stables are predictably well represented. Godolphin, three-time winners of the St Leger in the last five years, are going for quantity as well as quality with eight entrants, while Henry Cecil has six. It's worth £350K to the winner - which could be French Derby winner Holding Court.

JUMPERS FOR GOALPOSTS

The only bright spot for England in the grisly debacle of Euro 2000 was the team's nailnibbling 1-0 victory over old enemies Germany. We can go through it all again on 7 October when we take on the Germans in a 2002 World Cup qualifier. Let firststake.com's resident guru Big Ron Atkinson give you the inside gen on England's chances in this match and on the Finland qualifier (11 Oct). And what about the chances of France scoring a unique treble - world, Euro and Olympic titles?

PISTOL PETE TO QUIT?

Conservative betters love Pete Sampras. Wimbledon champ and world record Grand Slammer Pete is the one you'd bet your house on against all comers on a grass court. But now, at the ripe old age of 29, Pistol Pete is looking down the wrong end of the barrel as a mean new crew of racquetslingers attempt to depose him as the fastest gun in the west. Earlier this summer Sampras received a 6-4, 6-4 tonking from 19-year-old Aussie wonderkid Lleyton Hewitt in the Stella Artois, and he's had a string of injuries recently: first the back, then the ankle, then the shin. Which leads us to ask: could he be about to give it all up in favour of - golf? Don't laugh. Pete once hit a ball 332 yards to win a Celebrity Long Drive contest at Lake Tahoe, and could probably earn a decent living on the golf tour. Not that he needs to. Or maybe he'd like to drive for an F1 team: his admiration for the sport is well known. Place your bets...

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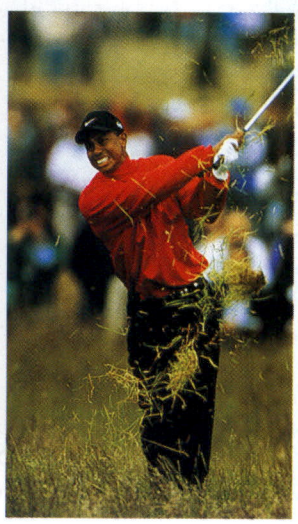
DANGER MEN ON THE LOOSE

Do we have a three-horse race here? Can Coulthard launch a consistent challenge? What's wrong with Mika? Too much raw herring? Will he retire? Will Schumi walk it? More than half the season's gone, but still plenty to play for. Stewart gatecrashed the McLaren/Ferrari party last year but what are the chances of an outsider getting onto the podium again? Get **Derek Warwick's** opinions (next page) - or press your Button now.

EAT MY CUTTINGS

You've got to marvel at the golfing phenomenon that is Tiger Woods. After he set a scarcely believable world record with an outrageous 15-shot victory at this year's US Open at Pebble Beach, Ernie Els and Tom Kite publicly admitted that they would be looking for second places only from now on. Woods now commands the same sort of awed respect on the world's fairways as Iron Mike once did in the ring: the scary difference being that the 24-year-old Californian is getting better. He says he hit one perfect shot at the US Open - 'the rest were just misses that avoided disaster.'



Which raises the prospect of a fascinating bet: when will he score the first sub-60 round in a major? That's a Holy Grail for golf, the equivalent of a three-minute mile, but if anyone can do it, Woods can.

In case you're suffering from terminal inadequacy by now, it might make you feel better to know that Tiger's real first name is Eldrick.

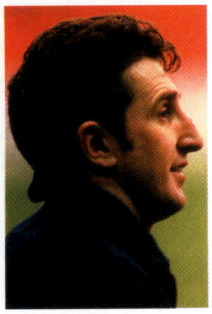
No wonder he changed it.

SUMMER 2000 EVENTLINE

CRICKET – Enjoy the odd ritual humiliation - or a dramatic reversal of fortune? Bin that August holiday and pick top runscorers at the Third, Fourth and Fifth England-West Indies Tests at Old Trafford (3 August), Leeds (17th) and The Oval (31st). **firststake.com**

THE OLYMPICS, SYDNEY – Sept 15 - Oct 1: Will US 100m & 200m sprint ace Maurice Greene set another world best? Last year's 9.79 WR at Athens, backed by more nines this season, gives credibility to his 3-gold aim for Sydney, but he'll have to upset the formbook: legend Michael 'Superman' Johnson stands in his way in the 200m. **firststake.com**

RUGBY – A huge year for the League code with the 2000 World Cup kicking off in Belfast on 28 October, and across the UK to the end of November. Sixteen teams in the main competition, including all four home UK nations, Australia and not one but two New Zealand teams. Oh dear, this is going to hurt. Turn over for **Jonathan Davies's** insights. **firststake.com**



scrum DOWN
JONATHAN DAVIES

Want to know what's happening in the world of Rugby? Here's our own expert and Rugby legend Jonathan Davies MBE to give us the muddy lowdown.

No playing it close to his chest - get the benefit of Jiffy's inside knowledge

Hold on to your seats - there's some excellent Rugby about to burst onto your screens, with the new kingpins to be decided at the Rugby League World Cup and a benchmark test for the current England and Scotland sides as the Rugby Union World Champions Australia arrive on our shores.

So, what's going to happen?

Kicking off with Rugby League, we're in for a terrific World Cup with high quality play and real talent guaranteed to be on show. My pick for the tournament crown has to be Australia, not just because of captain Brad Fittler but also because of the fantastic performances of Andrew Johns, surely the best player in the world at the moment. New Zealand are bound to be very strong too, with players like Stacey Jones and Joe Vagana in the squad.

What of the home sides? The **firststake.com**-sponsored England side looks like a good bet, but much will depend on the performance of their three most influential players: Andy Farell, Shaun Long and Adrian Morley. I think they have a strong chance of reaching the final and then who knows? They could just swing it.

So what about Wales? Well, for my money Iestyn Harris is the best player in the British Isles right now, but he's in a transitional team with a lot of young players who may be too new to give Iestyn the platform he needs. My heart says they can still do it, but I'll probably keep my hand in my pocket for the moment.

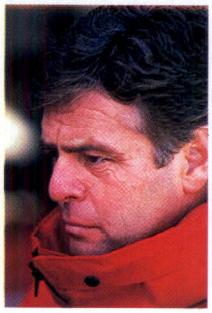
Want an outside bet? Try Lebanon. Many of their stars play at the highest level in Australia. And you can rely on Samoa and Tonga to give the big names a fright.

On to Rugby Union now. I'm always asked about the gap between Northern and Southern hemisphere teams. Well, England's performances in South Africa have shown how much that gap has shrunk. England's back room management is now first class, and the team looks fit and fast. They should really have won both games. Can they upset Australia? I think so. Keep a close eye on the **firststake.com** odds.

Scotland have had a tough time on their recent visit to New Zealand, but they too are fielding a transitional team. Many of the younger players will now have had the opportunity to learn and play at the highest level; they'll be better prepared for Australia, and should give them a tough time, but I can't see them snatching a result.

That's all for the moment, but be sure to check out the **firststake.com** web site for my regular updates on the Tri-Nations, Barbarians tour, Rugby Union Premiership and European Cup and the Super League.

Iestyn Harris: best League player in Britain?



right GEAR
DEREK WARWICK

Who's the greatest? Former World Sports Car Champion and Grand Prix star Derek Warwick gives you the firststake.com inside line on F1.

Schumi will be seeing red if he doesn't wrap up the F1 title this year

When analysing the 2000 F1 season, two questions always come up: can David Coulthard put up a consistent challenge to Michael Schumacher? And what's happened to Mika Hakkinen?

I've always been sceptical about David. On his day, DC can be one of the fastest drivers in F1 and you only have to look at his races at Spa in the past and Magny-Cours this year to see how committed and just how good he can be. I think we will still see some more exceptional performances from David this year, and he can certainly rack up more wins, but incidents like stalling at Montreal still lead me to question his mental strength and self-esteem. A great driver, yes: but a World Champion? I'd have to say no.

Mika's case is different. You have to look at what the guy's been through. Two long World Championship campaigns won at the eleventh hour, and all of the promotional stuff that he has to endure each closed season as the World Champion. I think somewhere inside the guy is a bit tired.

But Mika is a class act and he'll bounce back. I would bet on more wins for him this season and I can still see him coming in second in the Championship.

Only second, because my money is on Michael Schumacher to be World Champion again in 2000, simply because he is by far the best driver in the current field. Is he the greatest ever? That's an impossible call. Who can say how much more winning drivers like Senna still had to do? But Michael's certainly up there, and he could end up being the most successful driver.

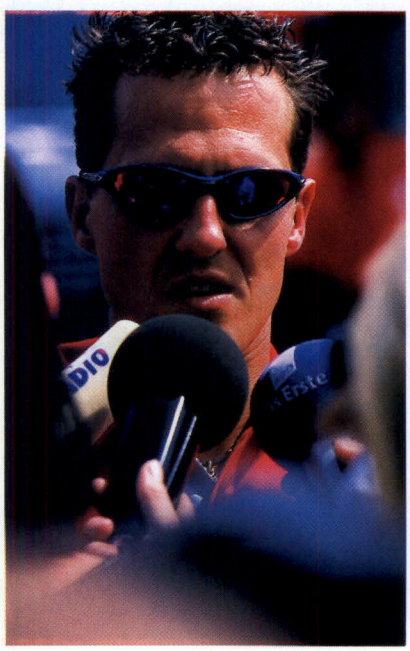
Of the other drivers, if I was setting up a team and Mika and Michael weren't available, I'd pick Ralf Schumacher. He's got to be a dark horse for a result this year. If the weather breaks and a wet race is on the cards, keep an eye on Ralf's firststake.com odds.

Fisichella and Trulli are also excellent drivers and should keep racking up the points, but on the whole I do question the quality of the current field. In the '70s, '80s and '90s there was strength in depth: most of the drivers, given the right car, were capable of winning. That's just not the case in the modern 'rent a drive' era.

So, for the moment Michael reigns supreme, but there is one cloud on his horizon: Juan Pablo Montoya.

US motorsport people think he's the best they have ever seen - and he's coming to F1.

The only question is: how soon?



Testing, one two three. Or just one.

Montoya's your man for '01

firststake.com – WHY? AND WHO?

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But there's so much more to the website **firststake.com** than 'quick-click' betting. There's tons of sports news and information from our seasoned team of sports writers, and exclusive contributions from our sports experts including Rugby legend Jonathan Davies, former World Sports Car champ and F1 driver Derek Warwick, and a soccer guru who needs no introductions, Big Ron Atkinson.

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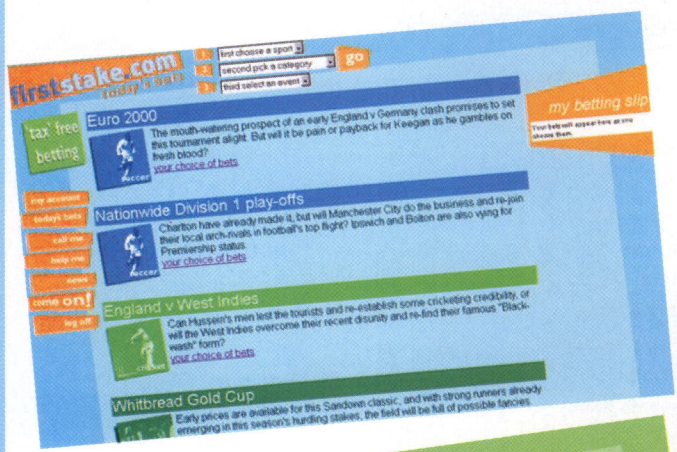

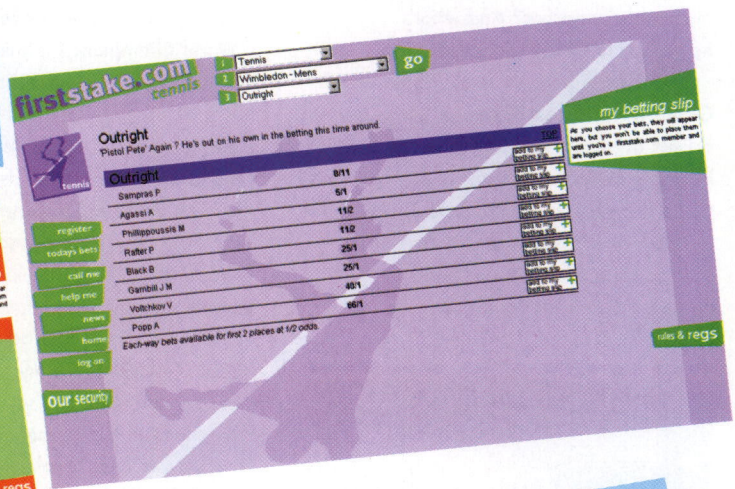

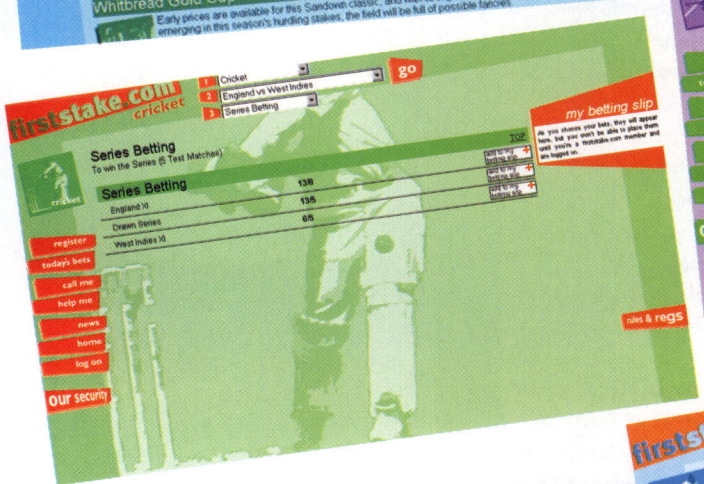

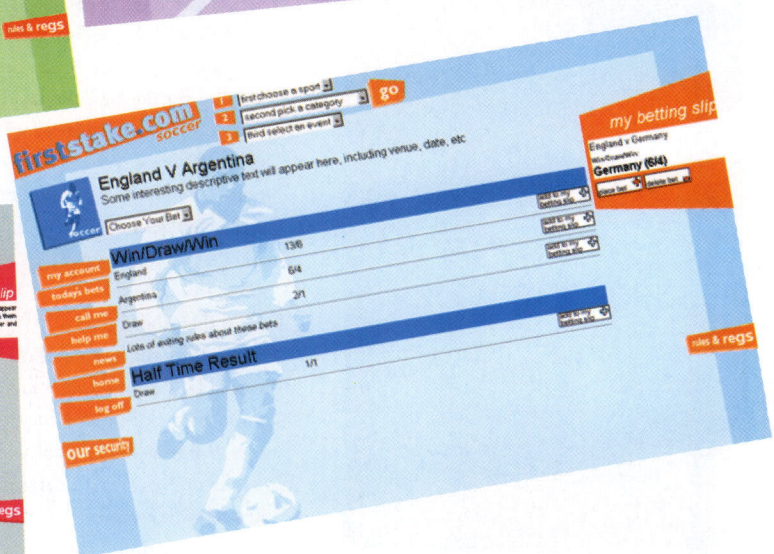

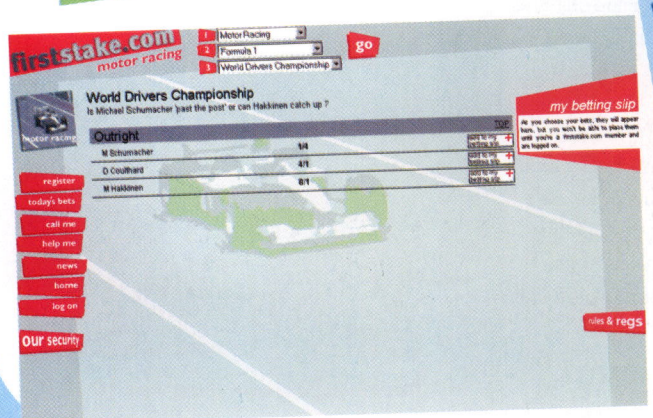

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Bristol-based **firststake.com** is owned by Firststake PLC, which has over 14 years' experience of running one of the UK's top independent betting shop chains. For **firststake.com** a new high-quality team has been assembled, blending consumer, internet and sports expertise in one unit.

firststake.com is on track to develop into a global service aimed at sports fans throughout the world. However, the company is UK based, allowing customers visiting the **firststake.com** site to be confident that they are dealing with a company which is regulated by the tough, internationally respected UK betting laws.

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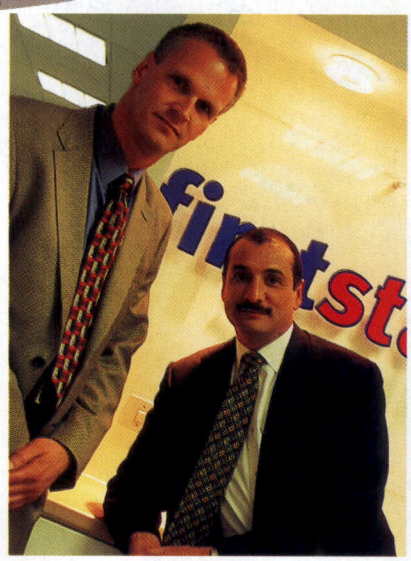

The impressive firststake.com nerve centre, with director Simon Grieve (left) and chairman Karim Ghaidan

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RON ATKINSON

The team that finishes above Manchester United will win the Premiership, says firststake.com's soccer pundit Ron Atkinson.

United will be there or thereabouts at the end of the season, and it will take an almighty effort by someone else to beat them. The only weakness, if you can call it that, is their shortage of world class centre halves. If they had someone like Italy's Fabio Cannavaro to partner Jaap Stam, they would be the complete team as far as I'm concerned.

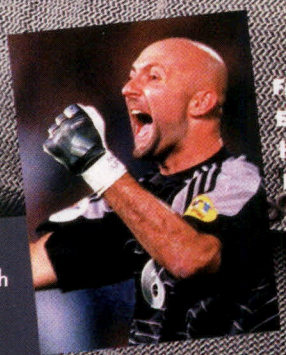
Both Chelsea and Arsenal have strengthened their squads in the summer, but they may take a bit of time to settle. Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink will give Chelsea a cutting edge up front, but there are doubts about the future of some of their other stars like Flo and Zola.

Arsenal have brought in some more French players and I do rate Robert Pires. I think Arsenal underachieved last year and should have been much closer to United. This year might be a transitional one for the Gunners as their back five, which has been their foundation for previous successes, is being broken up. For me, the bottom line is that if any side is above Man Utd at the end of the season, they will be champions.

As for relegation issues, I believe the promoted sides will again struggle to survive, but I expect Charlton to stay up at the expense of sides like Bradford who just avoided the drop last season.

So how will the Premiership big guns fare in Europe this season? Well, I think United and Arsenal - apparently moving back to Highbury for their home matches after the unsuccessful Wembley experiment - will both do well, but Leeds United might struggle to make an impact. They're still a very young team and the experence will be valuable, but I don't think they will go that far this season.

What I also believe is that there will be a revival in Italian fortunes following the disappointment of the national side in Euro 2000. Lazio, Juventus and Inter Milan should all figure in the latter stages of the competition.



French toast: Euro 2000 hero Fabien Barthez is between the sticks for United this season

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So did Peter.

David played up front for Clifford Rovers.
So did Peter.
David lost his virginity to Julie Gordon.
So did Peter.
David left school and moved to London.
So did Peter.
David found a 1965 Lambretta on QXL.com
and placed a bid for it.
So did Peter.

Some things are best kept to yourself QXL.com online auctions